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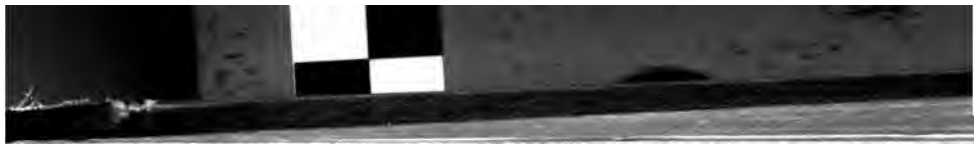
THE WAY OF AN INDIAN

BY FREDERIC REMINGTON

COLLECTION PRESENTED
BY HIS FAMILY TO THE
UNIVERSITY OF MICHIGAN
THE WILLIAM V. SMITH



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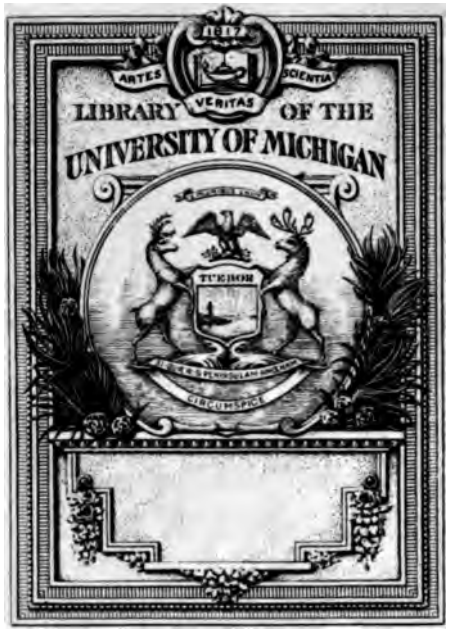
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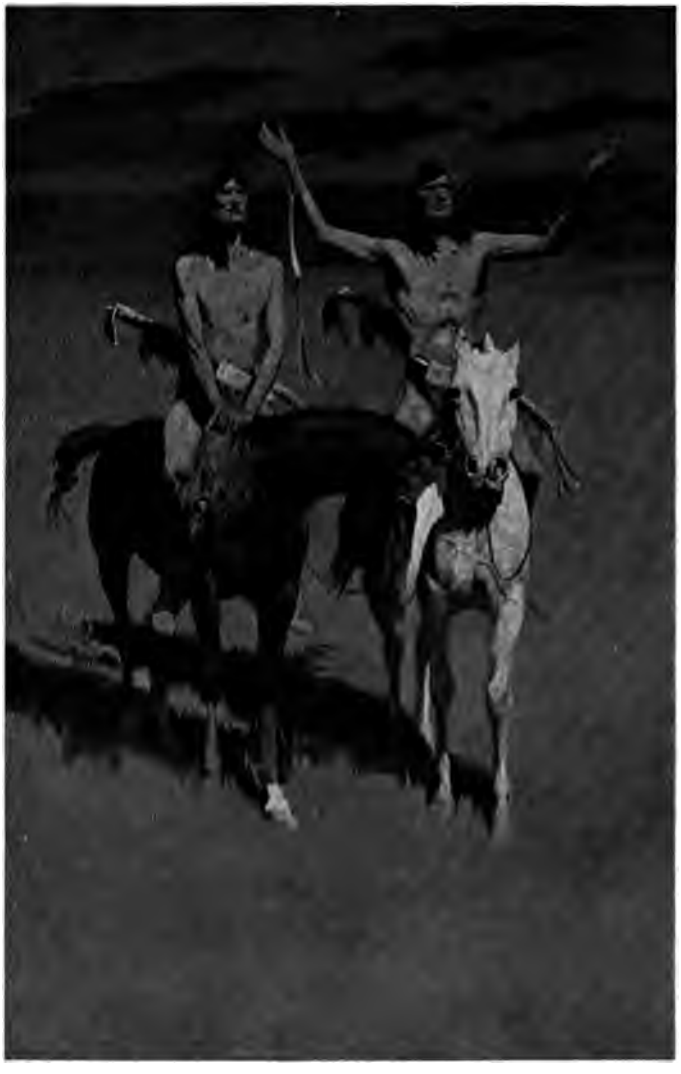

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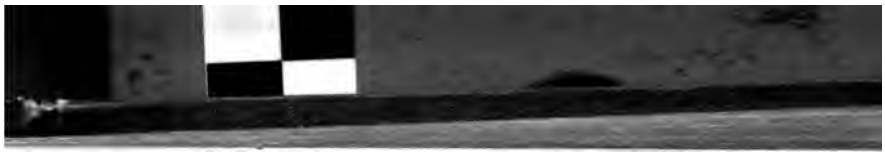

The Way of an Indian

Written and Illustrated
by
FREDERIC REMINGTON
Author of
"Men With the Bark On,"
"Crooked Trails," &c.

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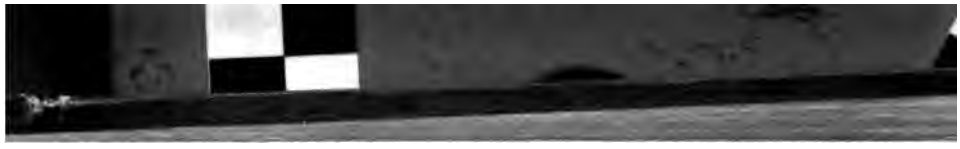

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I

White Otter's Own Shadow

The Way of an Indian

I

White Otter's Own Shadow

WHITE OTTER'S heart was bad. He sat alone on the rim-rocks of the bluffs overlooking the sunlit valley. To an unaccustomed eye from below he might have been a part of nature's freaks among the sand rocks. The yellow grass sloped away from his feet mile after mile to the timber, and beyond that to the prismatic mountains. The variegated lodges of the Chis-chis-chash village dotted the plain near the sparse woods of the creek-bottom; pony herds stood quietly waving their tails against the flies or

were driven hither and yon by the herdboys—giving variety to the tremendous sweep of the Western landscape.

This was a day of peace—such as comes only to the Indians in contrast to the fierce troubles which nature stores up for the other intervals. The enemy, the pinch of the shivering famine, and the Bad Gods were absent, for none of these things care to show themselves in the white light of a midsummer's day. There was peace with all the world except with him. He was in a fierce dejection over the things which had come to him, or those which had passed him by. He was a boy—a fine-looking, skillfully modeled youth—as beautiful a thing, doubt-

less, as God ever created in His sense of form; better than his sisters, better than the four-foots, or the fishes, or the birds, and he meant so much more than the inanimate things, in so far as we can see. He had the body given to him and he wanted to keep it, but there were the mysterious demons of the darkness, the wind and the flames; there were the monsters from the shadows, and from under the waters; there were the machinations of his enemies, which he was not proof against alone, and there was yet the strong hand of the Good God, which had not been offered as yet to help him on with the simple things of life; the women, the beasts of the fields, the ponies and the war-bands. He

could not even protect his own shadow, which was his other and higher self.

His eyes dropped on the grass in front of his moccasins—tiny dried blades of yellow grass, and underneath them he saw the dark traceries of their shadows. Each had its own little shadow—its soul—its changeable thing—its other life—just as he himself was cut blue-black beside himself on the sandstone. There were millions of these grass-blades, and each one shivered in the wind, maundering to itself in the chorus, which made the prairie sigh, and all for fear of a big brown buffalo wandering by, which would bite them from the earth and destroy them.

White Otter's people had been

strong warriors in the Chis-chis-chash; his father's shirt and leggins were black at the seams with the hair of other tribes. He, too, had stolen ponies, but had done no better than that thus far, while he burned to keep the wolf-totem red with honor. Only last night, a few of his boy companions, some even younger than himself, had gone away to the Absaroke for glory and scalps, and ponies and women—a war-party—the one thing to which an Indian pulsed with his last drop.

He had thought to go also, but his father had discouraged him, and yesterday presented him with charcoal ashes in his right hand, and two juicy buffalo ribs with his left. He had taken the charcoal. His father

said it was good—that it was not well for a young man to go to the enemy with his shadow uncovered before the Bad Gods.

Now his spirits raged within his tightened belly, and the fierce Indian brooding had driven him to the rim-rock, where his soul rocked and pounced within him. He looked at the land of his people, and he hated all vehemently, with a rage that nothing stayed but his physical strength.

Old Big Hair, his father, sitting in the shade of his tepee, looked out across at his son on the far-off sky-line, and he hid his head in his blanket as he gazed into his medicine-pouch. "Keep the enemy and the Bad Gods from my boy; he has

"He looked on the land of his people and he hated all vehemently."

no one to protect him but you, my medicine."

Thus hour after hour there sat the motionless tyro, alone with his own shadow on the hill. The shades of all living nature grew great and greater with the declining sun. The young man saw it with satisfaction. His heart swelled with brave thoughts, as his own extended itself down the hillside—now twenty feet long—now sixty—until the western sun was cut by the bluffs, when it went out altogether. The shadow of White Otter had been eaten up by the shadow of the hill. He knew now that he must go to the westward —to the western mountains, to the Inyan-kara, where in the deep recesses lay the shadows which had eaten

his. They were calling him, and as the sun sank to rest, White Otter rose slowly, drew his robe around him, and walked away from the Chis-chis-chash camp.

The split sticks in Big Hair's lodge snapped and spit gleams of light on the old warrior as he lay back on his resting-mat. He was talking to his sacred symbols. "Though he sleeps very far off, though he sleeps even on the other side, a spirit is what I use to keep him. Make the bellies of animals full which would seek my son; make the wolf and the bear and the panther go out of their way. Make the buffalo herds to split around my son, Good God! Be strong to keep the Bad God back, and all his

"O gray wolf of my clan—shall we have fortune?"

demons—lull them to sleep while he passes ; lull them with soft sounds."

And the Indian began a dolorous chanting, which he continued throughout the night. The lodge-fires died down in the camp, but the muffled intone came in a hollow sound from the interior of the tepee until the spirit of silence was made more sure, and sleep came over the bad and good together.

Across the gray-greens of the moonlit plains bobbed and flitted the dim form of the seeker of God's help.

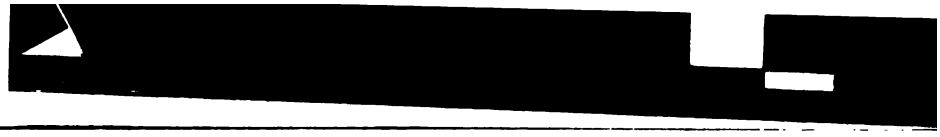
Now among the dark shadows of the pines, now in the gray sage-brush, lost in the coulees, but ceaselessly on and on, wound this figure of the night. The wolves sniffed

along on the trail, but came no nearer.

All night long he pursued his way, his muscles playing tirelessly to the demands of a mind as taut as bowstring.

Before the morning he had reached the Inyan-kara, a sacred place, and begun to ascend its pine-clad slopes. It had repulsion for White Otter, it was sacred—full of strange beings not to be approached except in the spiritual way, which was his on this occasion, and thus he approached it. To this place the shadows had retired, and he was pursuing them. He was in mortal terror—every tree spoke out loud to him; the dark places gave back groans, the night-winds swooped upon him, whisper-

"The wolves sniffed along on the trail, but came no nearer."



ing their terrible fears. The great underground wildcat meowed from the slopes, the red-winged moon-birds shrilled across the sky, and the stone giants from the cliffs rocked and sounded back to White Otter, until he cried aloud:

"O Good God, come help me. I am White Otter. All the bad are thick around me; they have stolen my shadow; now they will take me, and I shall never go across to live in the shadow-land. Come to White Otter, O Good God!"

A little brown bat whirled round and round the head of the terror-stricken Indian, saying: "I am from God, White Otter. I am come to you direct from God. I will take care of you. I have your shadow

under my wings. I can fly so fast and crooked that no one can catch up with me. No arrow can catch me, no bullet can find me, in my tricky flight. I have your shadow and I will fly about so fast that the spirit-wildcats and the spirit-birds and the stone giants cannot come up with me or your shadow, which I carry under my wings. Sit down here in the dark place under the cliffs and rest. Have no fear."

White Otter sat him down as directed, muffled in his robe. "Keep me safe, do not go away from me, ye little brown bat. I vow to keep you all my life, and to take you into the shadow-land hereafter, if ye will keep me from the demons now, O little brown bat!" And so pray-

ing, he saw the sky pale in the east as he lay down to sleep. Then he looked all around for his little brown bat, which was no more to be seen.

The daylight brought quiescence to the fasting man, and he sank back, blinking his hollow eyes at his shadow beside him. Its possession lulled him, and he paid the debt of nature, lying quietly for a long time.

Consciousness returned slowly. The hot sun beat on the fevered man, and he moved uneasily. To his ears came the far-away beat of a tom-tom, growing nearer and nearer until it mixed with the sound of bells and the hail-like rattle of gourds. Soon he heard the breaking of sticks under the feet of ap-

proaching men, and from under the pines a long procession of men appeared—but they were shadows, like water, and he could see the landscape beyond them. They were spirit-men. He did not stir. The moving retinue came up, breaking now into the slow side-step of the ghost-dance, and around the form of White Otter gathered these people of the other world. They danced "the Crazy Dance" and sang, but the dull orbs of the faster gave no signs of interest.

"He-eye, he-eye! we have come for you—come to take you to the shadow-land. You will live on a rocky island, where there are no ponies, no women, no food, White Otter. You have no medicine, and

the Good God will not protect you. We have come for you—hi-ya, hi-ya, hi-yah!"

"I have a medicine," replied White Otter. "I have the little brown bat which came from God."

"He-eye, he-eye! Where is your little brown bat? You do not speak the truth—you have no little brown bat from God. Come with us, White Otter." With this, one of the spirit-men strode forward and seized White Otter, who sprang to his feet to grapple with him. They clinched and strained for the mastery, White Otter and the camp-soldier of the spirit-people.

"Come to me, little brown bat," shouted the resisting savage, but the ghostly crowd yelled, "Your little

brown bat will not come to you, White Otter."

Still he fought successfully with the spirit-soldier. He strained and twisted, now felling the ghost, now being felled in turn, but they staggered again to their feet. Neither was able to conquer. Hour after hour he resisted the taking of his body from off the earth to be deposited on the inglorious desert island in the shadow-land. At times he grew exhausted and seemed to lie still under the spirit's clutches, but reviving, continued the struggle with what energy he could summon. The westering sun began lengthening the shadows on the Inyan-kara, and with the cool of evening his strength began to revive. Now he fought the

ghost with renewed spirit, calling from time to time on his medicine-bat, till at last when all the shadows had merged and gone together, with a whir came the little brown bat, crying "Na-hoin" [I come].

Suddenly all the ghost-people flew away, scattering over the Inyan-kara, screaming, "Hoho, hoho, hoho!" and White Otter sat up on his robe.

The stone giants echoed in clattering chorus, the spirit-birds swished through the air with a whis-s-s-tling noise, and the whole of the bad demons came back to prowl, since the light had left the world, and they were no longer afraid. They all sought to circumvent the poor Indian, but the little brown bat circled around and around his head,

and he kept saying: "Come to me, little brown bat. Let White Otter put his hand on you; come to my hand."

But the bat said nothing, though it continued to fly around his head. He waved his arms widely at it, trying to reach it. With a fortunate sweep it struck his hand, his fingers clutched around it, and as he drew back his arm he found his little brown bat dead in the vise-like grip. White Otter's medicine had come to him.

Folding himself in his robe, and still grasping the symbol of the Good God's protection, he lay down to sleep. The stone giants ceased their clamors, and all the world grew still. White Otter was sleeping.

White Otter's Own Shadow

In his dreams came the voice of God, saying: "I have given it, given you the little brown bat. Wear it always on your scalp-lock, and never let it away from you for a moment. Talk to it, ask of it all manner of questions, tell it the secrets of your shadow-self, and it will take you through battle so fast that no arrow or bullet can hit you. It will steal you away from the spirits which haunt the night. It will whisper to you concerning the intentions of the women, and your enemies, and it will make you wise in the council when you are older. If you adhere to it and follow its dictation, it will give you the white hair of old age on this earth, and bring you to the shadow-land when your turn comes."

The next day, when the sun had come again, White Otter walked down the mountain, and at the foot met his father with ponies and buffalo meat. The old man had followed on his trail, but had gone no farther.

"I am strong now, father. I can protect my body and my shadow—the Good God has come to Wo-pe-ni-in."

II

The Brown Bat Proves Itself

BIG HAIR and his son, White Otter, rode home slowly, back through the coulees and the pines and the sage-brush to the camp of the Chis-chis-chash. The squaws took their ponies when they came to their lodge.

Days of listless longing followed the journey to the Inyan-kara in search of the offices of the Good God, and the worn body and fevered mind of White Otter recovered their normal placidity. The red warrior on his resting-mat sinks in a torpor which a sunning mud-turtle on

a log only hopes to attain, but he stores up energy, which must sooner or later find expression in the most extended physical effort.

Thus during the days did White Otter eat and sleep, or lie under the cottonwoods by the creek with his chum, the boy Red Arrow—lying together on the same robe and dreaming as boys will, and talking also, as is the wont of youth, about the things which make a man. They both had their medicine—they were good hunters, whom the camp soldiers allowed to accompany the parties in the buffalo-surround. They both had a few ponies, which they had stolen from the Absaroke hunters the preceding autumn, and which had given them a certain boyish

distinction in the camp. But their eager minds yearned for the time to come when they should do the deed which would allow them to pass from the boy to the warrior stage, before which the Indian is in embryo.

Betaking themselves oft to deserted places, they each consulted his own medicine. White Otter had skinned and dried and tanned the skin of the little brown bat, and covered it with gaudy porcupine decorations. This he had tied to his carefully cultivated scalp-lock, where it switched in the passing breeze. People in the camp were beginning to say "the little brown bat boy" as he passed them by.

But their medicine conformed to

their wishes, as an Indian's medicine mostly has to do, so that they were promised success in their undertaking.

Old Big Hair, who sat blinking, knew that the inevitable was going to happen, but he said no word. He did not advise or admonish. He doted on his son, and did not want him killed, but that was better than no eagle-plume.

Still the boys did not consult their relatives in the matter, but on the appointed evening neither turned up at the ancestral tepee, and Big Hair knew that his son had gone out into the world to win his feather. Again he consulted the medicine-pouch and sang dolorously to lull the spirits of the night as his boy passed him on his war-trail.

The Brown Bat Proves Itself

Having traveled over the table-land and through the pines for a few miles, White Otter stopped, saying: "Let us rest here. My medicine says not to go farther, as there is danger ahead. The demons of the night are waiting for us beyond, but my medicine says that if we build a fire the demons will not come near, and in the morning they will be gone."

They made a small fire of dead pine sticks and sat around it wrapped in the skins of the gray wolf, with the head and ears of that fearful animal capping theirs—unearthly enough to frighten even the monsters of the night.

Old Big Hair had often told his son that he would send him out

with some war-party under a chief who well knew how to make war, and with a medicine-man whose war-medicine was strong; but no war-party was going then and youth has no time to waste in waiting. Still, he did not fear pursuit.

Thus the two human wolves sat around the snapping sticks, eating their dried buffalo meat.

"To-morrow, Red Arrow, we will make the war-medicine. I must find a gray spider, which I am to kill, and then if my medicine says go on, I am not afraid, for it came direct from the Good God, who told me I should live to wear white hair."

"Yes," replied Red Arrow, "we will make the medicine. We do

not know the mysteries of the great war-medicine, but I feel sure that my own is strong to protect me. I shall talk to a wolf. We shall find a big gray wolf, and if as we stand still on the plain he circles us completely around, we can go on, and the Gray Horned Thunder-Being and the Great Pipe-Bearing Wolf will march on our either side. But if the wolf does not circle us, I do not know what to do. Old Bear-Walks-at-Right, who is the strongest war-medicine-maker in the Chis-chis-chash, says that when the Gray Horned Thunder-Being goes with a war-party, they are sure of counting their enemies' scalps, but when the Pipe-Bearing Wolf also goes, the enemy cannot strike back,

and the Wolf goes only with the people of our clan."

Thus the young men talked to each other, and the demons of the night joined in their conversation from among the tree-tops, but got no nearer because the fire shot words of warning up to them, and the hearts of the boys were strong to watch the contest and bear it bravely.

With the first coming of light they started on—seeking the gray spider and the gray wolf. After much searching through the rotting branches of the fallen trees, White Otter was heard calling to Red Arrow: "Come! Here is the gray spider, and as I kill him, if he contains blood I shall go on, but if he

does not contain blood my medicine says there is great danger, and we must not go on."

Over the spider stooped the two seekers of truth, while White Otter got the spider on the body of the log, where he crushed it with his bow. The globular insect burst into a splash of blood, and the young savage threw back his shoulders with a haughty grunt, saying, "My medicine is strong—we shall go to the middle of the Absaroke village," and Red Arrow gave his muttered assent.

"Now we must find a wolf," continued Red Arrow, and they betook themselves through the pines to the open plains, White Otter following him but a step in rear.

In that day wolves were not hard to find in the buffalo country, as they swarmed around the herds and they had no enemies. Red Arrow arrogated to himself the privilege of selecting the wolf. Scanning the expanse, it was not long before their sharp eyes detected ravens hovering over a depression in the plain, but the birds did not swoop down. They knew that there was a carcass there and wolves, otherwise the birds would not hover, but drop down. Quickly they made their way to the place, and as they came in range they saw the body of a half-eaten buffalo surrounded by a dozen wolves. The wolves betook themselves slowly off, with many wistful looks behind, but one in

particular, more lately arrived at the feast, lingered in the rear.

Selecting this one, Red Arrow called: "O gray wolf of my clan, answer me this question. White Otter and I are going to the Absaroke for scalps—shall we have fortune, or is the Absaroke medicine too strong?"

The wolf began to circle as Red Arrow approached it and the buffalo carcass. Slowly it trotted off to his left hand, whereat the anxious warrior followed slowly.

"Tell me, pretty wolf, shall White Otter's and my scalps be danced by the Absaroke? Do the enemy see us coming now—do they feel our presence?" And the wolf trotted around still to the left.

"Come, brother. Red Arrow is of your clan. Warn me, if I must go back." And as the Indian turned, yet striding after the beast, it continued to go away from him, but kept an anxious eye on the dead buffalo meanwhile.

"Do not be afraid, gray wolf; I would not raise my arm to strike. See, I have laid my bow on the ground. Tell me not to fear the Absaroke, gray wolf, and I promise to kill a fat buffalo-cow for you when we meet again."

The wolf had nearly completed his circle by this time, and once again his follower spoke.

"Do you fear me because of the skin of the dead wolf you see by my bow on the ground? No, Red Ar-

row did not kill thy brother. He was murdered by a man of the dog clan, and I did not do it. Speak to me—help me against my fears." And the wolf barked as he trotted around until he had made a complete circle of the buffalo, whereat Red Arrow took up his bow and bundle, saying to White Otter, "Now we will go."

The two then commenced their long quest in search of the victims which were to satisfy their ambitions. They followed up the depression in the plains where they had found the buffalo, gained the timber, and walked all day under its protecting folds. They were a long way from their enemies' country, but instinctively began the cau-

tious advance which is the wild-animal nature of an Indian.

The old buffalo-bulls, elk and deer fled from before them as they marched. A magpie mocked at them. They stopped while White Otter spoke harshly to it: "You laugh at us, fool-bird, because we are boys, but you shall see when we come back that we are warriors. We will have a scalp to taunt you with. Begone now, before I pierce you with an arrow, you chattering woman-bird." And the magpie fluttered away before the unwonted address.

In the late afternoon they saw a band of wolves pull down and kill a fawn, and ran to it, saying, "See, the Pipe-Bearing Wolf is with us;

he makes the wolves to hunt for us of his clan," and they despoiled the prey.

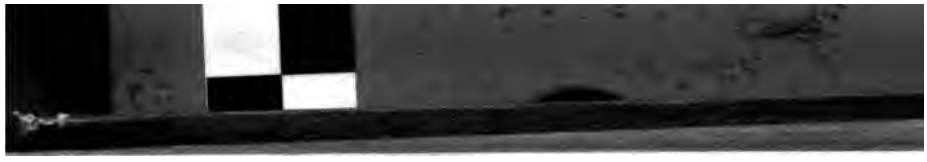
Coming to a shallow creek, they took off their moccasins and waded down it for a mile, when they turned into a dry watercourse, which they followed up for a long distance, and then stopped in some thick brush which lined its sides. They sat long together on the edge of the bushes, scanning with their piercing eyes the sweep of the plains, but nothing was there to rouse their anxiety. The wild animals were feeding peacefully, the sun sank to rest, and no sound came to them but the cry of the night-birds.

When it was quite dark, they made a small fire in the depths of the cut,

threw a small quantity of tobacco into it as a sacrifice, cooked the venison and went to sleep.

It was more than mere extension of interest with them; it was more than ambition's haughtiest fight; it was the sun-dried, wind-shriveled, tried-out atavistic blood-thirst made holy by the approval of the Good God they knew.

The miniature war-party got at last into the Absaroke country. Before them lay a big camp—the tepees scattering down the creek-bottom for miles, until lost at a turn of the timber. Eagerly they studied the cut and sweep of the land, the way the tepees dotted it, the moving of the pony herds and the coming and going of the hunters, but most of



all the mischievous wanderings of the restless Indian boys. Their telescopic eyes penetrated everything. They understood the movements of their foes, for they were of kindred nature with their own.

Their buffalo-meat was almost gone, and it was dangerous to kill game now for fear of attracting the ravens, which would circle overhead and be seen from the camp. These might attract an investigation from idle and adventurous boys and betray them.

"Go now; your time has come," said the little brown bat on White Otter's scalp-lock.

"Go now," echoed Red Arrow's charm.

When nothing was to be seen of

the land but the twinkle of the fires in the camp, they were lying in a deep washout under a bluff, which overlooked the hostile camp. Long and silently they sat watching the fires and the people moving about, hearing their hum and chanting as it came to them on the still air, together with the barking of dogs, the nickering of ponies, and the hollow pounding on a log made by old squaws hacking with their hatchets.

Slowly before the drowse of darkness, the noises quieted and the fires died down. Red Arrow felt his potent symbols whispering to him.

"My medicine is telling me what to do, White Otter."

"What does it say?"

"It says that there is a dangerous mystery in the blue-and-yellow tepee at the head of the village. It tells me to have great care," replied Red Arrow.

"Hough, my medicine says go on; I am to be a great warrior," replied White Otter.

After a moment Red Arrow exclaimed: "My medicine says go with White Otter, and do what he says. It is good."

"Come, then; we will take the war-ponies from beside the blue-and-yellow tepee. They belong to a chief and are good. We will strike an Absaroke if we can. Come with me." White Otter then glided forward in the darkness toward the camp. When quite near, they waited

for a time to allow the dogs to be still, and when they ceased to tongue, they again approached with greater caution.

Slowly, so as not to disturb the animals of the Indians, they neared the blue-and-yellow tepee, squatting low to measure its gloom against the sky-line. They were among the picketed ponies, and felt them all over carefully with their hands. They found the clip-maned war-ponies and cut the ropes. The Indian dogs made no trouble, as they walked their booty very slowly and very quietly away, as though they wandered in search of food. When well out of hearing, they sprang on their backs and circled back to the creek-bottom.

Nearing this, they heard the occasional inharmonious notes of an Indian flute among the trees. Instantly they recognized it as an Indian lover calling for his sweetheart to come out from the lodges to him.

"Hold the ponies, Red Arrow. My medicine tells me to strike," and White Otter slid from his horse. He passed among the tepees at the end of the village, then quickly approached the direction of the noise of the flute.

The lover heard his approaching footsteps, for White Otter walked upright until the notes stopped, when he halted to await their renewal. Again the impatient gallant called from the darkness to his

hesitating one, and our warrior advanced with bared knife in one hand, and bow in the other with an arrow notched.

When quite near, the Absaroke spoke in his own language, but White Otter, not understanding, made no reply, though advancing rapidly. Alas for the surging blood which burns a lover's head, for his quick advance to White Otter discovered for him nothing until, with a series of lightning-like stabs, the knife tore its way into his vitals—once, twice, three times, when, with a wild yell, he sank under his deluded infatuation.

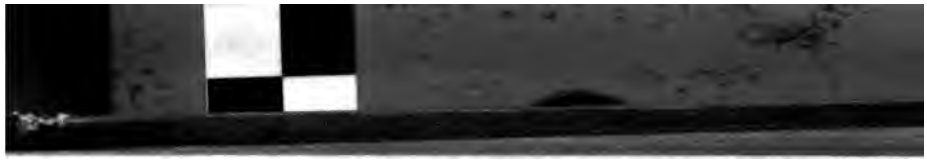
He doubtless never knew, but his yell had found its response from the camp. Feeling quickly, White Ot-

ter wound his hand among the thick black hair of his victim's head, and though it was his first, he made no bad work of the severance of the prize, whereat he ran fast to his chum. Attracted by the noise, Red Arrow rode up, and they were mounted. Cries and yells and barking came from the tepees, but silently they loped away from the confusion —turning into the creek, blinding the trail in the water for a few yards and regaining the hills from a much-tracked-up pony and buffalo crossing. Over the bluffs and across the hills they made their way, until they no longer heard the sounds of the camp behind them.

Filled with a great exultation, they trotted and loped along until

the moon came up, when White Otter spoke for the first time, addressing it: "Pretty Mother of the Night—time of the little brown bat's flight—see what I have done. White Otter is no longer a boy." Then to his pony: "Go on quickly now, pretty little war-pony. You are strong to carry me. Do not lame yourself in the dog-holes. Carry me back to the Chis-chis-chash, and I promise the Mother of the Night, now and here, where you can hear me speak, that you shall never carry any man but White Otter, and that only in war."

For three days and nights they rode as rapidly as the ponies could travel, resting an hour here and there to refresh themselves. Gradually re-



laxing after this, they assumed the fox-trot of the plains pony; but they looked many times behind and doubled often in their trail.

Seeing a band of wolves around a buffalo-bull which was fighting them off, they rode up and shot arrows into it—the sacrifice to the brother of the clan who had augured for them. Red Arrow affected to recognize his old acquaintance in the group.

As they rode on, White Otter spoke: "I shall wear the eagle-feather standing up in my scalp-lock, for I struck him with a hand-weapon standing up. It shall wave above the bat and make him strong. The little brown bat will be very brave in the time to come. We took the

clipped and painted war-ponies from under the chief's nose, Red Arrow."

"Yes, I did that—but my medicine grew weak when it looked at the great camp of the Absaroke. Your medicine was very strong, White Otter; there is no old warrior in the Chis-chis-chash whose is stronger. I shall take the charcoal again, and see if the Good God won't strengthen my medicine."

Time brought the victors in sight of their village, which had moved meanwhile, and it was late in the evening.

"Stay here with the ponies, Red Arrow, and I will go into my father's lodge and get red paint for us. We will not enter until to-morrow."

So White Otter stole into his own tepee by night—told his father of his triumph—got a quantity of vermilion and returned to the hills. When he and Red Arrow had bedaubed themselves and their ponies most liberally, they wrapped the scalp to a lance which he had brought out, then moved slowly forward in the morning light on their jaded ponies to the village, yelling the long, high notes of the war-whoop. The people ran out to see them come, many young men riding to meet them. The yelling procession came to the masses of the people, who shrilled in answer, the dogs ki-yied, and old trade-guns boomed. White Otter's chin was high, his eyes burned with a devilish light through the red

paint, as he waved the lance slowly, emitting from time to time above the din his battle-cry.

It was thus that White Otter became a man.

III

The Bat Devises Mischief Among the Yellow-Eyes

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WHITE OTTER the boy had been superseded by the man with the upright eagle-feather, whom people now spoke of as Ho-to-kee-mat-sin, the Bat. The young women of the Chis-chis-chash threw approving glances after the Bat as he strode proudly about the camp. He was possessed of all desirable things conceivable to the red mind. Nothing that ever bestrode a horse was more exquisitely supple than the well-laid form of this young Indian man; his fame as a hunter was great, but the taking of the Absaroke scalp

was transcendent. Still, it was not possible to realize any matrimonial hopes which he was led to entertain, for his four ponies would buy no girl fit for him. The captured war-pony, too, was one of these, and not to be transferred for any woman.

The Bat had conjured with himself and conceived the plan of a trip to the far south—to the land of many horses—but the time was not yet.

As the year drew on, the Chis-chis-chash moved to the west—to the great fall buffalo-hunt—to the mountains where they could gather fresh tepee-poles, and with the hope of trade with the wandering trapper bands. To be sure, the Bat had no skins of ponies to barter with them,

but good fortune is believed to stand in the path of every young man, somewhere, some time, as he wanders on to meet it. Delayed ambition did not sour the days for the Indian. He knew that the ponies and the women and the chieftainship would come in the natural way; besides which, was he not already a warrior worth pointing at?

He accompanied the hunters when they made the buffalo-surround, where the bellowing herds shook the dusty air and made the land to thunder while the Bat flew in swift spirals like his prototype. Many a carcass lay with his arrows driven deep, while the squaws of Big Hair's lodge sought the private mark of the Bat on them.

The big moving camp of the Chis-chis-chash was strung over the plains —squaws, dogs, fat little boys toddling after possible prairie dogs, tepee ponies, pack-animals with gaudy squaw trappings, old chiefs stalking along in their dignified buffalo-robes —and a swarm of young warriors riding far on either side.

The Bat and Red Arrow's lusty fire had carried them far in the front, and as they slowly raised the brow of a hill they saw in the shimmer of the distance a cavalcade with many two-wheeled carts—all dragging wearily over the country.

"The Yellow-Eyes!" said the Bat.

"Yes," replied Red Arrow. "They always march in the way the wild ducks fly—going hither and yon to

see what is happening in the land. But their medicine is very strong; I have heard the old men say it."

"Hough! it may be, but is not the medicine of the Chis-chis-chash also strong? Why do we not strike them, Red Arrow? That I could never understand. They have many guns, blankets, paints, many strong ponies and the strong water, which we might take," added the Bat, in perplexity.

"Yes, true, we might take all, but the old men say that the Yellow-Eyes would not come again next green grass—we would make them afraid. They would no more bring us the powder and guns or the knives. What could we do without iron arrow-heads? Do you remember how

hard it was to make bone arrow-heads, when we were boys and could not get the iron? Then, the Yellow-Eyes are not so many as the Chis-chis-chash, and they are afraid of us. No, we must not make them more timid," replied the wise Red Arrow.

"But we may steal a gun or a strong pony, when they do not look," continued the indomitable Bat.

"Yes—we will try."

"I will go down the hill, and make my pony go around in a circle so that the camp may send the warriors out to us," saying which, the Bat rode the danger-signal, and the Chis-chis-chash riders came scurrying over the dry grass, leaving lines of white dust in long marks behind

them. Having assembled to the number of a hundred or so, the chiefs held a long consultation, each talking loudly from his horse, with many gestures. After some minutes, the head war-chief declared in a high, rough voice that the man must go to the Yellow-Eyes with the peace-sign, and that they must not do anything to make the Yellow-Eyes afraid. The white men had many guns, and if they feared the Indians they would fire on them, and it would be impossible to get near the powder and paints and knives which were in the carts.

The warriors took each from a little bag his paints and plumes. Sitting in the grass, they decorated themselves until they assumed all

hues—some red, and others half white or red across the face, while the ponies came in for streaks and daubs, grotesque as tropic birds.

So over the hill rode the line of naked men, their ponies dancing with excitement, while ahead of them a half-breed man skimmed along bearing a small bush over his head. The cavalcade of the Yellow-Eyes had halted in a compact mass, awaiting the oncoming Indians. They had dismounted and gone out on the sides away from the carts, where they squatted quietly in the grass. This was what the Yellow-Eyes always did in war, unlike Indians, who diffused themselves on their speeding ponies, sailing like hawks.

A warrior of the Yellow-Eyes came

to meet them, waving a white cloth from his gun-barrel after the manner of his people, and the two peace-bearers shook hands. Breaking into a run, the red line swept on, their ponies' legs beating the ground in a vibratory whirl, their plumes swishing back in a rush of air, and with yelps which made the white men draw their guns into a menacing position.

At a motion of the chief's arm, the line stopped. The Yellow-Eyed men rose slowly from the grass and rested on their long rifles, while their chief came forward.

For a long time the two head men sat on their ponies in front of the horsemen, speaking together with their hands. Not a sound was to be

heard but the occasional stamp of a pony's hoof on the hard ground. The beady eyes of the Chis-chis-chash beamed malevolently on the white chief—the blood-thirst, the warrior's itch, was upon them.

After an understanding had been arrived at, the Indian war-chief turned to his people and spoke. "We will go back to our village. The Yellow-Eyes do not want us among their carts—they are afraid. We will camp near by them to-night, and to-morrow we will exchange gifts. Go back, Chis-chis-chash, or the white chief says it is war. We do not want war." This and much more said the chief and his older men to the impulsive braves, whose uncontrollable appetites had been whetted

by the sight of the carts. The white man was firm and the Indians drew off to await the coming of the village.

The two camps were pitched that night two miles apart; the Yellow-Eyes intrenched behind their packs and carts, while the Indians, being in overwhelming strength, did much as usual, except that the camp-soldiers drove the irrepressible boys back, not minding to beat their ponies with their whips when they were slow to go. There was nothing that a boy could do except obey when the camp-soldier spoke to him. He was the one restraint they had, the only one.

But as a mark of honor, the Bat and Red Arrow were given the distinguished honor of observing the Yellow-Eyed camp all night, to note

its movements if any occurred, and with high hearts they sat under a hill-top all through the cold darkness, and their souls were much chastened by resisting the impulses to run off the white man's ponies, which they conceived to be a very possible undertaking. The Bat even declared that if he ever became a chief this policy of inaction would be followed by one more suited to pony-loving young men.

Nothing having occurred, they returned before daylight to their own camp so to inform the war-chief.

That day the Chis-chis-chash crowded around the barricade of the Yellow-Eyes, but were admitted only a few at a time. They received many small presents of coffee and sugar,

and traded what ponies and robes they could. At last it became the time for the Bat to go into the trappers' circle. He noted the piles of bales and boxes as he passed in, a veritable mountain of wealth; he saw the tall white men in their buckskin and white blanket suits, befringed and beribboned; their long, light hair, their bushy beards, and each carrying a well-oiled rifle. Ah, a rifle! That was what the Bat wanted; it displaced for the time all other thoughts of the young warrior. He had no robes and came naked among the traders—they noted him—only an Indian boy, and when all his group had bartered what they had, the half-breed who had rode with the peace branch spoke to him, interpreting:

"The white chief wants to know if you want to buy anything."

"Yes. Tell the white chief that I must have a gun, and some powder and ball."

"What has the boy to give for a gun?" asked a long-bearded leader.

"A pony—a fast buffalo-pony," replied our hero through the half-breed.

"One pony is not enough for a gun; he must give three ponies. He is too young to have three ponies," replied the trader.

"Say to the Yellow-Eye that I will give him two ponies," risked the Bat.

"No, no; he says three ponies, and you will not get them for less. The white chief means what he says.

He says you must leave here now with those people so that older men can come and trade."

"Let me see the gun," demanded the boy. A gun was necessary for the Bat's future progression.

A subordinate was directed to show a gun to him, which he did by taking him one side and pulling one from a cart. It was a long, yellow-stocked smoothbore, with a flintlock. It had many brass tacks driven into the stock, and was bright in its cheap newness. As the Bat took it in his hand he felt a nervous thrill, such as he had not experienced since the night he had pulled the dripping hair from the Absaroke. He felt it all over, smoothing it with his hand; he cocked and snapped it; and the

little brown bat on his scalp-lock fairly yelled: "Get your ponies, get your ponies—you must have the gun."

Returning the gun, the Bat ran out, and after a time came back with his three ponies, which he drove up to the white man's pen, saying in Chis-chis-chash: "Here are my ponies. Give me the gun."

The white chief glanced at the boy as he sat there on a sturdy little clip-maned war-pony—the one he had stolen from the Absaroke. He spoke, and the interpreter continued: "The trader says he will take the pony you are riding as one of the three."

"Tell him that I say I would not give this pony for all the goods I see.

Here are my three ponies; now let him give me the gun before he makes himself a liar," and the boy warrior wore himself into a frenzy of excitement as he yelled: "Tell him if he does not give me the gun he will feel this war-pony in the dark, when he travels; tell him he will not see this war-pony, but he will feel him when he counts his ponies at daylight. He is a liar."

"The white chief says he will take the war-pony in place of three ponies, and give you a gun, with much powder and many balls."

"Tell the Yellow-Eye he is a liar, with the lie hot on his lips," and the Bat grew quiet to all outward appearance.

After speaking to the trader, the

interpreter waved at the naked youth, sitting there on his war-pony: "Go away—you are a boy, and you keep the warriors from trading."

With a few motions of the arms, so quickly done that the interpreter had not yet turned away his eye, the Bat had an arrow drawn to its head on his leveled bow, and covering the white chief.

Indians sprang between; white men cocked their rifles; two camp-soldiers rushed to the enraged Bat and led his pony quietly away, driving the three ponies after him.

The trading progressed throughout the day, and at night the Indians all came home, but no one saw the Bat in his father's lodge, and also

"The interpreter waved at the naked youth, sitting there on his war-pony."

Red Arrow was missing. All the Indians had heard of how the white trader had lied to the boy, and they knew the retribution must come. The trading was over; the white men had packed up their goods, and had shaken hands with the chiefs and head men, promising to come again when the grass was green.

The Chis-chis-chash were busy during the ensuing days following the buffalo, and their dogs grew fat on the leavings of the carcasses. The white traders drew their weary line over the rolling hills, traveling as rapidly as possible to get westward of the mountains before the snows encompassed them. But by night and by day, on their little flank in rear or far in front, rode

two vermilion warrior-boys, on painted ponies, and one with an eagle-plume upright in his scalp-lock. By night two gray wolves stood upward among the trees or lay in the plum-branches near enough to see and to hear the lving talk of the Yellow-Eyes.

Old Delaware hunters in the caravan told the white chief that they had seen swift pony-tracks as they hunted through the hills; and that, too, many times. The tracks showed that the ponies were strong and went quickly—faster than they could follow on their jaded mounts. The white chief must not trust the solitude.

But the trailing buffalo soon blotted out the pony-marks; the white

men saw only the sailing hawks, and heard only bellowing and howling at night. Their natures responded to the lull, until two horse-herders, sitting in the willows, grew eager in a discussion, and did not notice at once that the ponies and mules were traveling rapidly away to the bluffs. When the distance to which the ponies had roamed drew their attention at last, they looked hard and put away their pipes and gathered up their ropes. Two ponies ran hither and thither behind the horses. There was method in their movements—were they wild stallions? The white men moved out toward the herd, still gazing ardently; they saw one of these ponies turn quickly, and as he did so a naked figure

shifted from one side to the other of his back.

"Indians! Indians!'

A pistol was fired—the herders galloped after.

The horse-thieves sat up on their ponies, and the long, tremulous notes of the war-whoop were faintly borne on the wind to the camp of the Yellow-Eyes. Looking out across the plains, they saw the herd break into a wild stampede, while behind them sped the Bat and Red Arrow, waving long-lashed whips, to the ends of which were suspended blown-up buffalo-bladders, which struck the hard ground with sharp, explosive thumps, rebounding and striking again. The horses were terrorized, but, being worn down, could not draw away

from the swift and supple war-steeds. There were more than two hundred beasts, and the white men were practically afoot.

Many riders joined the pursuit; a few lame horses fell out of the herd and out of the race—but it could have only one ending with the long start. Mile by mile the darkness was coming on, so that when they could no longer see, the white pursuers could hear the beat of hoofs, until that, too, passed—and their horses were gone.

That night there was gloom and dejection around the camp-fires inside the ring of carts. Some recalled the boy on the war-pony with the leveled bow; some even whispered that Mr. McIntish had lied to the

boy, but no one dared say that out loud. The factor stormed and damned, but finally gathered what men he could mount and prepared to follow next day.

Follow he did, but the buffalo had stamped out the trail, and at last, baffled and made to go slow by the blinded sign, he gave up the trail, to hunt for the Chis-chis-chash village, where he would try for justice at the hands of the head men.

After seven days' journey he struck the carcasses left in the line of the Indians' march, and soon came up with their camp, which he entered with appropriate ceremony, followed by his retinue—half-breed interpreter, Delaware trailers, French horse-herders, and two real Yellow-

Eyed men—white Rocky Mountain trappers.

He sought the head chief, and they all gathered in the council tepee. There they smoked and passed the pipe. The squaws brought kettles of buffalo-meat, and the eager youngsters crowded the door until a camp-soldier stood in the way to bar them back. The subchiefs sat in bronze calm, with their robes drawn in all dignity about them.

When all was ready, Mr. McIntish stood in the middle of the lodge and spoke with great warmth and feeling, telling them that Chis-chis-chash warriors had stolen his horse-herd—that he had traced it to their camp and demanded its return. He accused them of perfidy, and warned

them that from thence on no more traders would ever come into their country, but would give their guns to the Absaroke, who would thus be able to overwhelm them in war. No more would the chiefs drink of the spring-water they loved so well—no more would a white man pass the pipe with the Chis-chis-chash if justice was not done; and much more which elicited only meaningless grunts from the stoic ring of listeners.

When he had finished and sat down, the head chief arose slowly, and stepping from the folds of his robe, he began slowly to talk, making many gestures. "If the white chief had tracked the stolen ponies to his camp, let him come out to

the Indian pony-herds and point them out. He could take his horses."

The face of the trader grew hard as he faced the snare into which the chief had led him, and the lodge was filled with silence.

The camp-soldier at the entrance was brushed aside, and with a rapid stride a young Indian gained the center of the lodge and stood up very straight in his nakedness. He began slowly, with senatorial force made fierce by resolve.

"The white chief is a liar. He lied to me about the gun; he has come into the council tepee of the Chis-chis-chash and lied to all the chiefs. He did not trail the stolen horses to this camp. He

will not find them in our pony-herds."

He stopped awaiting the interpreter. A murmur of grunts went round.

"I—the boy—I stole all the white chief's ponies, in the broad daylight, with his whole camp looking at me. I did not come in the dark. He is not worthy of that. He is a liar, and there is a shadow across his eyes. The ponies are not here. They are far away—where the poor blind Yellow-Eyes cannot see them even in dreams. There is no man of the Chis-chis-chash here who knows where the horses are. Before the liar gets his horses again, he will have his mouth set on straight," and the Bat turned slowly around, sweep-

ing the circle with his eyes to note the effect of his first speech, but there was no sound.

Again the trader ventured on his wrongs—charged the responsibility of the Bat's actions on the Chis-chis-chash, and pleaded for justice.

The aged head chief again arose to reply, saying he was sorry for what had occurred, but he reminded McIntish that the young warrior had convicted him of forged words. What would the white chief do to recompense the wrong if his horses were returned? He also stated that it was not in his power to find the horses, and that only the young man could do that.

Springing again to his feet, with all the animation of resolution, the

Bat's voice clicked in savage gutturals. "Yes, it is only with myself that the white liar can talk. If the chiefs and warriors of my tribe were to take off my hide with their knives—if they were to give me to the Yellow-Eyes to be burnt with fire—I could not tell where the ponies lie hidden. My medicine will blind your eyes as does the north wind when he comes laden with snow.

"I will tell the white man how he can have his ponies back. He can hand over to me now the bright new gun which lies by his side. It is a pretty gun, better than any Indian has. With it, his powder-horn and his bullet-bag must go. If he does this, he can have back

"I will tell the white man how he can have his ponies back."

all his horses, except those I choose to keep. Is it good? I will not say it again. I have spoken."

The boy warrior stood with arms dropped at his sides, very straight in the middle of the tent, the light from the smoke hole illuminating the top of his body, while his eye searched the traders.

McIntish gazed through his bushy eyebrows at the victor. His burnt skin turned an ashen-green; his right hand worked nervously along his gun-barrel. Thus he sat for a long time, the boy standing quietly, and no one moved in the lodge.

With many arrested motions, McIntish raised the rifle until it rested on its butt; then he threw it from himself, and it fell with a crash across

the dead ashes of the fire, in front of the Bat. Stripping his powder-horn and pouch off his body, violently he flung them after, and the Bat quickly rescued them from among the ashes.

Gathering the tokens and girding them about his body, the Bat continued: "If the white liar will march up this river one day and stop on the big meadows by the log house, which has no fire in it; if he will keep his men quietly by the log house, where they can be seen at all times; if he will stay there one day, he will see his ponies coming to him. I am not a boy; I am not a man with two tongues; I am a warrior. Go, now—before the camp-soldiers beat you with sticks."

IV

The New Lodge

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The New Lodge

THE Yellow-Eyes had departed, and at the end of four days the Bat and Red Arrow drove a band of thirty ponies and mules upon the herd-grounds, where they proceeded to cut them into two bunches—fifteen horses for each young man. This was not a bad beginning in life, where ponies and robes were the things reckoned. The Bat got down from his horse and tossed a little brother onto it, telling him to look after them. The copper-colored midget swelled perceptibly as he loped away after the

Bat's nineteen horses, for the twentieth, which was the war-pony, was taken to be picketed by Big Hair's Lodge.

As the Bat stalked among the Chis-chis-chash, he was greeted often —all eyes turned to him. No mere boys dared longer to be familiar; they only stood modestly, and paid the tribute to greatness which much staring denotes. The white man's new rifle lay across his left arm, his painted robe dragged on the ground, his eagle-feather waved perpendicularly above the dried Bat's skin, the sacred red paint of war bloodied his whole face, and a rope and a whip—symbols of his success with horses—dangled in his right hand, while behind him followed

the smart war-pony, covered with vermilion hand-prints as thickly as the spots on a brook-trout. The squaws ran from their fleshing, their chopping or their other work to look at the warrior who made all the camp talk. Wisdom mellowed by age, in the forms of certain old men, sat back and thought disturbedly of the future, as is the wont of those who have little time to live. They feared for the trade with the Yellow-Eyes, for no Chis-chis-chash could forge iron into guns and knives, which were the arbiter between the tribes. This the Bat had brought upon them. But still they thought more than they said; warriors as promising as this young one did not often appear.

There was a feast at the lodge. The Bat told his exploits to the warriors, as he strode about the night-fire in the tepee, waving his arms, giving his war-yell until he split the air and made his listeners' ears ring. The medicine Bat had made him strong; it had opened the way and he had proved his faith. He sang while a man beat on a dried skin drum:

"Hi-ha—s' yehe's' yeye'!
'Hi-he—e' yehe' e' yeye'!
'Hi' niso' nihu'—Hi' yeye'!
'Hi' niso' nihu'—Hi' yeye'!"

And the yelping chorus came from the fire-lit circle, "Hi ya—hi ya—hi—ye'ye'!—ya'—ya'—ya'—ya!—e' e' e'."

On the morrow, men from the

military order of the "red lodges," the "miayuma," came to the Bat with charcoal, and he fasted many days before undergoing his initiation. The sacred symbols of the body, their signs and ceremonies, were given him, and he had become a pillar in the Chis-chis-chash social structure.

The nights were growing cold, and occasional bleak winds blew down from the great mountains, warning the tribe to be about its mission. The loads of dry meat made the horses weary, when the camp was broken; the tepee-poles were bright and new, and the hair began to grow on the ponies.

One day, as they moved, they could see far ahead on the plains the colorless walls of Fort Laramie, and

the wise-men feared for their reception, but the pillage of the traders' horses sat lightly on the people. The Yellow-Eyes should have a care how they treated the Chis-chis-chash. It was in their power to put out the white man's fires. The Bat's people were an arrogant band, and held their heads high in the presence of aliens. Their hands were laid heavily and at once on anyone who stood in their path. All the plains tribes, the French Indians at the posts and the Yellow-Eyed trapper-bands stood in awe of them. With the exception of the chief, the people had never been inside of the second gate at Laramie. They traded through a hole in the wall, and even then the bourgeois Papin thought he played

with fire. Their haughty souls did not brook refusal when the trader denied them the arrangement of the barter.

The tribe encamped, and got rid of what ponies, robes and meats it could dispose of for guns and steel weapons, and "made whisky." The squaws concealed the arms while the warriors raged, but the Chis-chis-chash in that day were able to withstand the new vices of the white men better than most people of the plains.

On one occasion, the Bat was standing with a few chiefs before the gateway of the fort. M. Papin opened the passage and invited them to enter. Proudly the tall tribesmen walked among the *engagés*—seeming to pay no heed, but the eye of an

Indian misses nothing. The surroundings were new and strange to the young man. The thick walls seemed to his vagabond mind to be built to shield cowards. The white men were created only to bring goods to the Indians. They were weak, but their medicine was wonderful. It could make the knives and guns, which God had denied to the Bat's people. They were to be tolerated; they were few in number—he had not seen over a hundred of them in all his life. Scattered here and there about the post were women, who consorted with the *engagés*—half-breeds from the Mandaus and Delawares, Sioux and many other kinds of squaws; but the Chis-chis-chash had never sold a woman to the

"Nothing but cheerful looks followed the Bat."

traders. That was a pride with them.

The sisterhood of all the world will look at a handsome man and smile pleasantly; so nothing but cheerful looks followed the Bat as he passed the women who sat working by the doorways. They were not ill-favored, these comforters of the French-Creole workmen, and were dressed in bright calicos and red strouding, plentifully adorned with bright beads. The boy was beginning to feel a subtle weakening in their presence. His fierce barbarism softened, and he began to think of taking one. But he put it aside as a weakness—this giving of ponies for these white men's cast-offs. That thought was unworthy

of him—a trade was not his wild way of possessing things.

He stood quietly leaning against a door on Papin's balcony, observing the men laboring about the enclosure, his lip curling upward with fine contempt. The "dogs" were hewing with axes about some newly made carts, or rushing around on errands as slaves are made to do. Everyone was busy and did not notice him in his brown study.

From within the room near by he heard a woman sing a few notes in an unknown tongue. Without moving a muscle of his face he stepped inside the room, and when his eye became accustomed to the light, saw a young squaw, who sat beading, and wore a dress superior to that of the

others. She stared a moment and then smiled. The Bat stood motionless for a long time regarding her, and she dropped her gaze to her needlework.

"I' nisto' niwon (You were humming)," spoke the statued brave, but she did not understand.

Again came the clicking gutturals of the harsh Chis-chis-chash tongue: "Whose squaw are you?"—which was followed by the sign-talk familiar to all Indians in those days.

The woman rose, opening her hand toward him and hissing for silence. Going to the door, she looked into the sunlighted court, and, pointing to the factor who was directing workmen, replied, "Papin." He understood.

She talked by signs as she drew back, pointing to the Bat, and then ran her hand across her own throat as though she held a knife, and then laughed while her eyes sparkled.

Again he understood, and for the first time that day he smiled. There are no preliminaries when a savage warrior concludes to act. The abruptness of the Bat's love-making left room for few words, and his attentions were not repulsed except that the fear of her liege lord out by the carts made her flutter to escape that she might reassure herself. She was once again covered by the sweep of the warrior's robe, and what they whispered there, standing in its folds, no man can tell. The abrupt entrance of Pa-

pin drowned all other thoughts, and filled the quiet fort with a whirl of struggles and yells, in which all joined, even to the dogs.

The outcome was that the Bat found himself thrown ignominiously into the dust outside the walls, and the gate slammed after him. He gathered himself together and looked around. No one of his people had seen the mêlée from which he had emerged so ingloriously, yet humiliation was terrible. Nothing like this had occurred before. Cowardly French half-breeds had laid their hands on the warrior's body, even on his sacred bat and eagle-plume; and they had been content to throw him away as though he were a bone—merely to be rid of him.

His rage was so great that he was in a torpor; he did not even speak, but walked away hearing the shrieks of the squaw being beaten by Papin.

Going to the camp, he got a pony and rode to the hills, where he dismounted and sat down. The day passed, the night came, and morning found the Bat still sitting there.

He seemed not to have moved. His eyes burned with the steady glare of the great cats until, allowing his robe to fall away, he brought out his firebag and lighted his pipe. Standing up, he blew a mouthful of smoke to each of the four corners of the world; then lowered his head in silence for a long while. He had recovered himself now. The

Bat no longer shrieked, but counciled coldly for revenge. His shadow beside him was blood-red as he gazed at it.

Presently he mounted and rode toward camp; his eyes danced the devil's dance as they wandered over the battlements of Fort Laramie. He wanted a river of blood—he wanted to break the bones of the whites with stone hatchets—he wanted to torture with fire. He would have the girl now at any cost.

After eating at Big Hair's lodge, he wandered over to the Fort. He said not a word to anyone as he passed. An old chief came out of the gate, turned the corner, saw the Bat, and said: "The white chief says you tried to steal his squaw.

His heart is cold toward our people. He will no longer trade with us. What have you done?"

The Bat's set eyes gazed at the old man, and he made no reply, but stood leaning against the walls while the chief passed on.

No one noticed him, and he did not move for hours. He was under that part of the wall behind which was the room of the woman, and not unexpectedly he heard a voice from above in the strange language which he did not understand. Looking up, he saw that she was on the roof. He motioned her to come down to him, at the same time taking his rifle from under his robe.

The distance was four times her height, but she quickly produced a

rawhide lariat, which she began to adjust to a timber that had been exposed in the roof, dirt having been washed away. Many times she looked back anxiously, fearful of pursuit, until, testing the knot and seeming satisfied, she threw her body over the edge and slid down.

The Bat patted her on the back, and instinctively they fled as fast as the woman could run until out of rifle-shot, when her new brave stayed her flight and made her go slowly that they might not attract attention. They got at last to the pony-herds, where the Bat found his little brother with his bunch of ponies. Taking the cherished war-pony and two others, he mounted his new woman on one, while he led the

other beside his own. They galloped to the hills. Looking back over the intervening miles of plain, their sharp eyes could see people running about like ants, in great perplexity and excitement. Papin had discovered his woes, and the two lovers laughed loud and long. He had made his slaves lay violent hands on the Bat and he had lashed the girl, Seet-se-be-a (Mid-day Sun), with a pony whip, but he had lost his woman.

Much as the Bat yearned to steep his hands in the gore of Papin, yet the exigencies of the girl's escape made it impossible now, as he feared pursuit. On the mountain-ridge they stopped, watching for the pursuing party from the Fort, but the

"The ceremony of the Fastest Horse."

Cheyennes swarmed around and evidently Papin was perturbed.

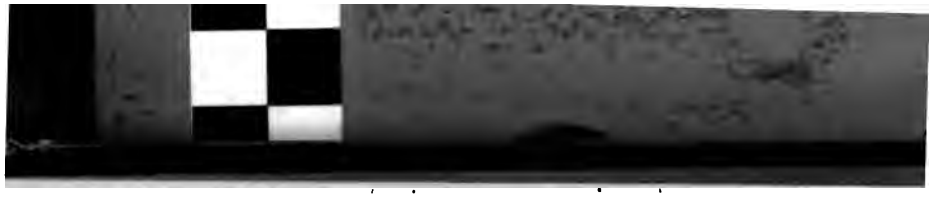
So they watched and talked, and fondled each other, the fierce Cheyenne boy and Minataree girl—for she proved to be of that tribe—and they were married by the ancient rites of the ceremony of the Fastest Horse.

Shortly the tribe moved away to its wintering-grounds, the young couple following after. The Bat lacked the inclination to stop long enough to murder Papin; he deferred that to the gray future, when the "Mid-day Sun" did not warm him so.

As they entered the lodges, they were greeted with answering yells, and the sickening gossip of his mis-

adventure at Laramie was forgotten when they saw his willing captive. The fierce old women swarmed around, yelling at Seet-se-be-a in no complimentary way, but the fury of possible mothers-in-law stopped without the sweep of the Bat's elk-horn pony whip.

Before many days there was a new tepee among the " Red Lodges," and every morning Seet-se-be-a set a lance and shield up beside the door, so that people should know by the devices that the Bat lived there.



V

"The Kites and the Crows"

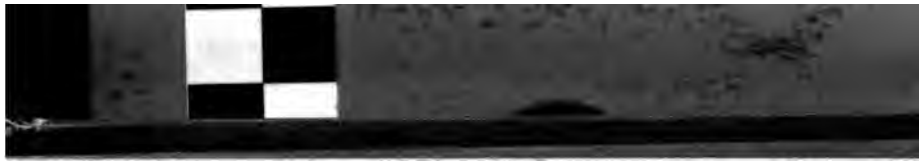
V

"The Kites and the Crows"

THE Bat had passed the boy stage. He was a Chis-chis-chash warrior now, of agile body and eager mind. No man's medicine looked more sharply after his physical form and shadow-self than did the Bat's; no young man was quicker in the surround; no war-pony could scrabble to the lariat ahead of his in the races. He had borne more bravely in the sun-dance than all others, and those who had done the ceremony of "smoking his shield" had heard the thick bull's-hide promise that no arrow or bullet

should ever reach the Bat. He lost the contents of his lodge at the game of the plum-stones—all the robes that Seet-se-be-a had fleshed and softened, but more often his squaw had to bring a pack-pony down to the gamble and pile it high with his winnings. He was much looked up to in the warrior class of the Red Lodges, which contained the tried-out braves of the Cheyenne tribe; moreover old men—wise ones—men who stood for all there was in the Chis-chis-chash, talked to him occasionally out of their pipes, throwing measuring glances from under lowering brows in his direction to feel if he had the secret Power of the Eyes.

The year passed until the snow



fell no longer and Big Hair said the medicine chiefs had called it "The Falling Stars Winter" and had painted the sign on the sacred robes. The new grass changed from yellow to a green velvet, while the long hair blew off the horses' hides in bunches and their shrunken flanks filled up with fat. As Nature awoke from the chill and began to circulate the Indians responded to its feel. They stalked among the pony herds, saying to each other: "By the middle of the moon of the new Elk Horns, these big dogs will carry us to war. There the enemy will know that the Chis-chis-chash did not die in the snow. There will be blood in our path this grass."

Red Arrow and the Bat prayed

often together to the Good God for fortune in war, as they sat in the lodge running their eyes along their arrows, picking those which were straightest, and singing:

"This arrow is straight
This arrow is straight
It will kill us a man
It will kill us a man—"

and the Bat boasted to his chum: "When I come to the enemy, I shall go nearer than any other Red Lodge man. I shall have more scalps to dance and no bullet or arrow can stop the Bat when he strikes his pony with the whip." Red Arrow believed this as much as the boaster did, for men must believe they will do these things before they do them. "Red Arrow, we will not go with a

big war-party. We will go with Iron Horn's band of twenty warriors. Then next winter at the warriors' feasts when we tell what we did, we will count for something. Red Arrow, we will see for the first time the great war-medicine."

The boys of the camp herded the ponies where the grass was strongest, and the warriors watched them grow. It was the policy of the tribe to hang together in a mass, against the coming of the enemy, for the better protection of the women and the little ones, but no chiefs or councils were strong enough to stop the yearning of the young Cheyennes for military glory. All self-esteem, all applause, all power and greatness, came only down that fearful road—the war

trail. Despite the pleadings of tribal policy Iron Horn, a noted war- and mystery-man, secretly organized his twenty men for glorious death or splendid triumph. Their orders went forth in whispers. "By the full of the moon at the place where the Drowned Buffalo water tumbled over the rocks one day's pony-travel to the west."

Not even Seet-se-be-a knew why the Bat was not sitting back against his willow-mat in the gray morning when she got up to make the kettle boil, but she had a woman's instinct which made her raise the flap to look out. The two war-ponies were gone. Glancing again behind the robes of his bed she saw, too, that the oiled rifle was missing. Quickly she ran

to the lodge of Red Arrow's father, wailing, "My man has gone, my man has gone—his fast ponies are gone—his gun is gone," and all the dogs barked and ran about in the shadows while Red Arrow's mother appeared in the hole in the tepee, also wailing, "My boy has gone, my boy has gone," and the village woke up in a tumult. Everyone understood. The dogs barked, the women wailed, the children cried, the magpies fluttered overhead while the wolves answered back in piercing yells from the plains beyond.

Big Hair sat up and filled his pipe. He placed his medicine-bag on the pole before him and blew smoke to the four sides of the earth and to the

top of the lodge saying: "Make my boy strong. Make his heart brave, O Good Gods—take his pony over the dog-holes—make him see the enemy first!" Again he blew the smoke to the deities and continued to pray thus for an hour until the sun-lit camp was quiet and the chiefs sat under a giant cotton-wood, devising new plans to keep the young men at home.

Meanwhile from many points the destined warriors loped over the rolling landscape to the rendezvous. Tirelessly all day long they rose and fell as the ponies ate up the distance to the Drowned Buffalo, stopping only at the creeks to water the horses. By twos and threes they met, galloping together—speaking

not. The moon rose big and red over their backs, the wolves stopped howling and scurried to one side—the ceaseless thud of the falling hoofs continued monotonously, broken only by the crack of a lash across a horse's flank.

At midnight the faithful twenty men were still seated in a row around Iron Horn while the horses, too tired to eat, hung their heads. The old chief dismissed his war-party saying: "To-morrow we will make the mystery—we will find out whether the Good Gods will go with us to war or let us go alone."

Sunrise found the ponies feeding quietly, having recovered themselves, while the robed aspirants sat in a circle; the grass having been removed

from the enclosed space and leveled down.

A young man filled the long medicine-pipe and Iron Horn blew sacrificial puffs about him, passing it in, saying: "Let no man touch the pipe who has eaten meat since the beginning of the last sun. If there are any such he must be gone—the Good Gods do not speak to full men." But the pipe made its way about the ring without stopping.

Iron Horn then walked behind the circle sticking up medicine-arrows in the earth—arrows made sacred by contact with the Great Medicine of the Chis-chis-chash and there would hold the Bad Gods in check while the Good Gods counseled.

Resuming his seat, he spoke in a

harsh, guttural clicking: "What is said in this circle must never be known to any man who does not sit here now. The Bad Gods will hear what the Good Gods say in such an event and the man who tells against them will be deserted by the Good Gods forever. Every man must tell all his secrets—all the things he has thought about his brothers since the last war-medicine; all the things he has done with the women of the tribe; all that the Gods have whispered in his dreams. He must tell all and forever say no more," and Iron Horn rested on his words for a moment before continuing his confession.

"Brothers, I am a great medicine-man—no arrow can touch me—I

do not fear men. I am too old for the women to look upon. I did not say it at the time but when the sun was low on the land last winter I made it turn blue for a time. I made it cold in the land. Our horses were poor and when I made the sun blue we crusted the buffalo and killed many with our lances. Brothers, it was I who made the sun blue in the winter.

"Brothers, I love you all—I shall say no more," and Iron Horn threw tobacco on the earth in front of him.

A young man next to him dropped his robe from about his body and with fierce visage spoke excitedly, for it was his first confession, and his Indian secretiveness was straining

under the ordeal. It was mostly about gallantries and dreams—all made like the confessions which followed. They were the deeds and thoughts common to young Indian men. They ministered to the curiosity of people whose world lay within the camping circle of their small tribe, and they were as truthful as a fear of God could make them, except the dreams, and they too were real to the Indian mind.

The men now began to paint themselves and to take their paraphernalia from their war-bags and put it on. Iron Horn said: "Brothers—when it is dark I will put a medicine-arrow into the ground where my feet are now, and if in the morning it has not moved we will go back to the

lodges; but if it has moved, we will go in the direction in which it points.

"When we start toward the enemy no man must eat, drink or sit down by day, no matter how long or fatiguing the march; if he halts for a moment he must turn his face toward his own country so that the Gods may see that it is his wish to return there. We must sleep with our own faces toward our village. No two men must lie covered by the same robe. He must not ride or walk in a beaten path lest the spirit of the path go running on ahead of us to warn the enemy, and if by chance we do, we must come to the big medicine and rub it on the horses' legs to ward off the danger." This said, Iron Horn said much more to his young braves

—all the demon fears which the savage mind conjures up in its contact with the supernatural, together with stated forms of decorations to be painted on the ponies, and then he dismissed them, saying: "Come to the circle before the moon rises while it is yet dark, but meanwhile sit each man alone and in silence and we will see what the Good Gods do with the arrows."

The warriors led their ponies off to various points in the savage gorge and sat motionless the live-long day while the river rushed ceaselessly over the wild rocks and the ravens soared in the blue heavens.

By night they came gliding back —picking their way among the rocks and stood by the bared earth of the

mystery place. The chief struck a light and bending over saw the arrow lying out in the middle of the space many feet away from where he had placed it. The smooth earth was dotted by the tracks of coyotes but the arrow pointed nearly southwest, and it was the way they must take. Rising, he pointed, saying: "The Good Gods say we must go this way —where they point. The medicine is strong—the Gods sent their little medicine-wolves to show us.

"We will make the sacrifices and then we will go. We shall strike the enemy."

They struck a pole in the center of the circle, and when the moon rose each warrior approached it and either hung some piece of rag or

buckskin on it or put various implements at its foot, muttering meanwhile prayers for protection and success and rubbing the pole with his weapons to vitalize them spiritually.

By the full light of the moon the mounted men, each leading a horse, rode slowly off one after the other, into the hills, and they did not halt until nearly morning when they again sat in a magic circle and took heed of the medicine-arrows before lying down to sleep in a long row, facing toward the village.

The day following found the small war-party advancing cautiously, preceded far in advance on its flanks by watchful scouts. They were all eyes for any hunting bands of Utes or Shoshones and might see the Yellow-

Eyes trooping along in a line as the ducks fly.

For days marched the band, winding through the hills or splashing through the flat river until early one morning they observed one of the scouts far in advance flashing a looking-glass from a hilltop. Lashing their horses they bore on toward him, dashing down the cut banks at reckless speed or clambering up them helter-skelter. No inequalities of ground opposed their desperate speed.

Arriving at the place they rode boldly up to the mounted scout and far down on the plains saw three Yellow-Eyes driving twelve pack-animals heavily loaded. They paused to repaint their faces and put the sacred war-marks on the ponies, not

forgetting to tie up their tails before continuing the mad charge. The poor beaver-hunters saw the on-coming, knew their danger and instantly huddled their horses and began dropping their packs. They had selected a slight knoll of the prairie and before many minutes had a rude barricade constructed with their packages. Dropping behind this they awaited the Indians with freshly primed rifles and pistols.

The Chis-chis-chash rode in a perfect line and when within a hundred yards gave shrill ki-yi's, lashed their whips and the ponies clattered through the dust. It would be all over with the three luckless trappers in an instant. When nearly half the distance had been consumed three rifles

cracked. Iron Horn and another warrior reeled on their mounts but clung desperately, stopping in no way the rush. In an instant when it seemed as if the Indians were about to trample the Yellow-Eyes, a thin trail of fire ran along the grass from the barricade and with a blinding flash a keg of powder exploded with terrific force right under the front feet of the rushing ponies. Pistols cracked from behind the pile of roped goods. Four ponies lay kicking on the grass together with six writhing men, all blackened, bleeding and scorched. The other ponies reeled away from the shock—running hopelessly from the scene with their unresting and half-stunned riders. All but one, for the Bat pulled desper-

ately at his hair-lariat which was tied to the under jaw of the horse, striking his pony across the head with his elk-horn whip, and, lashing fiercely, he rushed the pony right to the barricade. Firing his rifle into it swerving, he struck the bunch of trapper-horses which had already begun to trot away from the turbulent scene, and drove them off in triumph. He alone had risen superior to the shock of the white man's fire trap.

Four of the wounded Indians got slowly to their feet, one after the other, and walked painfully away. The whites had reloaded meanwhile and fatally shot the last man as he was nearly out of range.

When the defeated party came together, it made a mystic circle in the

turf of open prairie, not over three arrow flights from the Yellow-Eyes, and there sat down. In the center lay the Indian dead and three more, sightless, with their hair singed off and their bodies horribly scorched, while Iron Horn was stretched on a blanket, shot through the body and singing weakly his death-song.

"Let the Bat take the medicine—he is a strong warrior—the bursting fire did not stop him. He ate the fire. I am a great warrior—I am a great medicine-man, but I could not eat the fire. Brothers, the scalps of the beaver hunters must dry in the Red Lodges." Then the dying warrior became incoherent and scarcely mumbled. The Bat took black paint from his fire bag and rubbed

"He rubbed the pony right to the barricade."

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it on the face of the dying man while the decreased circle of warriors yelped the death-cry dolorously. For an hour this continued, rising and rising in scales until the sadness had changed to fury. The Bat held the medicine toward the sun saying "Mia-yu-ma —nis heva—la ma—nih. Nis tako navero na' hiko' no hi (Red Lodges —he has taken pity on us—he will make you strong—I am strong)."

They took the dead and wounded and deposited them near where the led-horses were kept. The injured men were attended to, and the dead buried carefully in robes.

"One warrior lies dead near the feet of Yellow-Eyes; if they get his scalp he will go to the hungry islands in the middle of the Big Water and

we shall never see him in the spirit-land. We must not let them touch his hair, brothers. If the Yellow-Eyes come from behind their packs we must charge—we must eat the flying fire or all be rubbed out. If they do not come out the ravens will not have to wait long for the feast." Thus said the Bat. He had kept his word about going farther toward the enemy than any other and was now moved to resort to strategy. He did not martial his warriors in a line but deployed them about the citadel of the plains. That place, robbed of its horrors, gave no sign of life except a burned and injured pony which half raised itself and slowly moved its head from side to side in its agony. But behind it there was

promise of deadly rifles and the bursting fire.

The warriors stood like vultures on the plains, by twos and threes, smoking and feeding their ponies from their lariats. They spoke of the chief no longer as the Bat, but called him "Fire Eater," or "The man who eats the flying fire." The ravens hovered about the place and wise gray wolves sat haunched in a still larger ring without. Slowly the sun moved across the heavens. The scene was quiet and pitiful.

Night came on, but nothing happened. Before the moon rose out of the darkness a rifle flashed behind the bales, when again the quiet became intensified by the explosion. The wolves sang their lullaby of death,

but on the prairie that was as the ceaseless, peaceful surging of the waves on the ocean sand.

When the warriors returned in small parties to their camp for refreshment they saw the dead body of Owl Bear—he who had fallen outside the barricade of the Yellow-Eyes. The "Fire Eater" had brought it in during the night—having approached and carried it away—drawing the fire of the rifle but saving the hair and shadow-self of his brother.

For seven days the Chis-chis-chash stood about the doomed place. Twice they had approached it and had lost another warrior, shot by the fatal rifle of the beaver-men. Then they had drawn off and given up in the

face of the deadly shooting—concluding to let nature work for the victory.

Becoming eager and restless on the last day, the "Fire Eater" wounded the white war-party. Splendidly painted and with feather hanging from his tail, he galloped out toward the fort. His brothers, seeing this rashness, closed in with him, but no sign of life came from the stronghold.

Boldly he rode up to the edge of the bales of goods, and glancing over saw the swelled and blackened bodies of the three beaver men and knew by the skinned lips and staring eyes that thirst had done its work. The braves gathered, but no man dismounted and one by one they

turned and rode away. "The bad spirits of the dead may get into our bodies—come away—come away—the sun shines now, but we must be far away when the night sets in. Our medicine-arrows will keep them off after that," said the Fire Eater.

Much cast down the Red Lodge warriors gathered up their dead and rode slowly back toward the village.

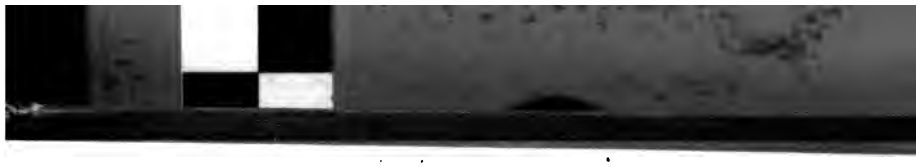
On the morning of the second day the Cheyennes awoke to find the Fire Eater gone, but he had left his horses on their hands. "The young chief's heart is bad. He has gone away by himself. He will not want us to follow him. He cannot go into the village with our dead and wear the mourning paint," whispered they, one to another.

This was true—for the fierce spirit of the young man could not brook defeat. The Chis-chis-chash should never see blackened ashes on a cheek which was only fitted for the red paint. The shield of the Fire Eater should never face to the lance—the little brown bat flapped fiercely in the wind and screamed for blood and scalp braids. The warrior traveled lazily on his journey—light-hearted and fiercely resolved.

After many days of wolfish travel he saw signs of the vicinage of the Shoshone Indians. They were a hungry band who had come out of the mountains and were hunting the buffalo. He followed the pony tracks where they were not lost in the buffalo's trails, finding picked

bones, bits of castaway clothing and other signs until he saw the scouts of the enemy riding about the hills. Approaching carefully in the early night and morning he found the camp and lay watching for depressions in the fall of some bluffs. But the young men were ceaselessly active, and he did not see an opportunity to approach. During the night he withdrew to a pine-clad rocky fortress which promised better concealment, and his surprise was great in the morning to see the Shoshones preparing to make a buffalo-surround in the valley immediately in front of him. From all directions they came and encompassed the buffalo below.

The Fire Eater carefully pressed



down the tuft of loose hair which sat upright on the crown of his head after the manner of his people, and leaving his rifles he walked down toward the seething dust-blown jumble where the hunters were shearing their bewildered game. No one noticed him, and the dust blew over him from the milling herd. Presently a riderless pony came by, and seizing its lariat he sprang on its back. He rode through the whirling dust into the surround and approaching an excited and preoccupied Shoshone stabbed him repeatedly in the back. The Indian yelled, but no one paid any attention in the turmoil. The Fire Eater slung his victim across his pony, taking his scalp. He seized his lance and pony

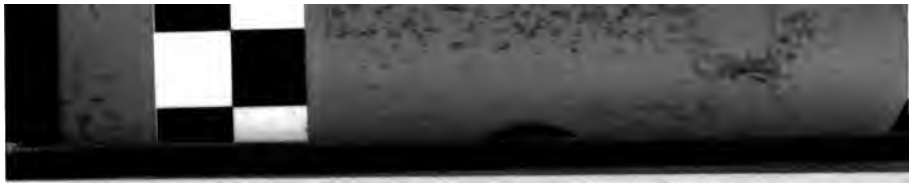
and rode slowly away toward the bluffs. After securing his rifle he gained the timber and galloped away.

On his road he met a belated scout of the enemy coming slowly on a jaded horse. This man suspected nothing until the Fire Eater raised his rifle, when he turned away to fly. It was too late and a second scalp soon dangled at the victor's belt. He did not take the tired horse for it was useless.

Swiftly he rode now for he knew that pursuit was sure, but if one was instituted it never came up and before many days the Cheyennes rode along his own tepees, waving the emblem of his daring, and the camp grew noisy with exultation. The mourning paint was washed from

"The Fire Eater slung his victim across his pony, taking his scalp."

each face and the old pipe-men said: "The Bat will be a great leader in war—his medicine is very strong and he eats fire." The chiefs and council withheld their discipline, and the Fire Eater grew to be a great man in the little world of the Chis-chis-chash, though his affairs proportionately were as the "Battles of the Kites and Crows."



VI

The Fire Eater's Bad Medicine

VI

The Fire Eater's Bad Medicine

THE Chis-chis-chash had remembered through many "green grasses" that the Fire Eater had proven himself superior to the wrath of the Bad Gods who haunt the way of the men who go out for what the Good Gods offer—the ponies, the women and the scalps. He had become a sub-chief in the Red Lodge military clan. He had brought many painted war-bands into the big camp with the scalps of their tribal enemies dangling from their lance heads. The village had danced often over the results of his victories. Four

wives now dressed and decorated his buffalo robes. The seams of his clothes were black with the hair of his enemies, as he often boasted, and it required four boys to herd his ponies. His gun was reddened, and there were twenty-four painted pipes on his shield indicative of the numbers who had gone down before him in war. In the time of the ceremonies, his chief's war-bonnet dragged on the ground and was bright with the painted feathers which belonged to a victor. He hated the Yellow-Eyes, not going often to their posts for trade, and like a true Indian warrior he despised a beaver trap. It was conceded by old men that time would take the Fire Eater near to the head chieftainship, while at all

times the young men were ready to follow him to the camp of the foe.

One day in the time of the Yellow-grass the Fire Eater had sat for hours, without moving, beside his tepee, looking vacantly out across the hills and speaking to no human being. His good squaws and even his much cherished children went about the camping-space quietly, not caring to disturb the master. He was tired of the lazy sunshine of home; the small cackle of his women, one to another, annoyed him; he was strong with the gluttony of the kettle which was ever boiling; the longing for fierce action and the blood-thirst had taken possession of him. Many times he reached up with his hand to the crown of his head and patted

the skin of the little brown bat, which was his medicine. This constantly talked to him in his brown study, saying: "Look—look at the war-ponies—the big dogs are fat and kick at each other as they stand on the lariats. They are saying you are too old for them; they are saying that the Fire Eater will ride on a travvis. They think that the red hands will no more be painted on their flanks."

But the warrior, still with his sleepy dog-stare fixed on the vacant distance, answered the bat-skin: "We will seek the help of the Good Gods to-night; we will see if the path is clear before us. My shadow is very black beside me here—I am strong." Thus the Indian and his

medicine easily agreed with each other in these spiritual conversations —which thing gave the Fire Eater added respect for the keeper of his body and his shadow-self.

Far into the night the preoccupied Indian leaned against his resting-mat watching the little flames leaping from the split sticks as his youngest squaw laid them on the fire. The flickering yellows sang to him:

"The fire does not sit still,
The fire does not sit still—
Come, brother, take up the pony-whip,
Come, brother, take up the pony-whip,"

and much more that was soothing to his mood.

After a time he sprang to his feet and drove the woman out of the lodge. Untying his war-bags he

produced a white buffalo-robe and arranged it to sit on. This was next to the bat-skin his strongest protector. When seated on it he lost contact with the earth—he was elevated above all its influences. Having arranged his gun, shield and war-bonnet over certain medicine-arrows the sacred bat-skin was placed on top. This last had in the lapse of years been worn to a mere shred and was now contained in a neat buckskin bag highly ornamented with work done by squaws. Lighting his medicine-pipe, after having filled it in the formal manner due on such occasions, he blew the sacrificial whiffs to the four corners of the world, to the upper realms and to the lower places and then addressed

the Good Gods. All the mundane influences had departed—even his body had been left behind. He was in communion with the spirit world —lost in the expectancy of revelation. He sang in monotonous lines, repeating his extemporizations after the Indian manner, and was addressing the Thunder Being—the great bird so much sought by warriors. He sat long before his prayers were heeded, but at last could hear the rain patter on the dry sides of the tepee and he knew that the Thunder Bird had broken through the air to let the rain fall. A great wind moaned through the encampment and in crushing reverberations the Thunder Bird spoke to the Fire Eater: "Go—go to the Absaroke—

take up your pony-whip—your gun wants to talk to them—your ponies squeal on the ropes—your bat says no arrow or bullet can find him—you will find me over your head in time of danger. When you hear me roar across the sky and see my eyes flash fire—sit down and be still—I am driving your enemies back. When you come again back to the village you must sacrifice many robes and ponies to me." Lower and lower spoke the great bird as he passed onward—the rain ceased to beat—the split sticks no longer burned—the Fire Eater put up the sacred things and was alone in the darkness.

In the early morning the devotee stalked over to the great war-prophet

—a mystery man of the tribe who could see especially far on contemplated war-paths. The sun was bright when they were done with their conversation, but the signs were favorable to the spirit of war. The Thunder Bird had on the preceding night also told the war-prophet that the Chis-chis-chash had sat too long in their lodges, which was the reason why he had come to urge activity.

Accordingly—without having gone near the boiled meat—the Fire Eater took the war-pipe around the Red Lodges and twenty young men gladly smoked it. In council of the secret clan the war-prophet and the sub-chief voiced for war. The old chiefs and the wise men grown stiff from riding and conservative toward

a useless waste of young warriors, blinked their beady eyes in protest but they did not imperil their popularity by advice to the contrary. The young men's blood-thirst and desire for distinction could not be curbed.

So the war-prophet repaired to his secret lodge to make the mystery, while the warriors fasted until it was done. Everything about the expedition had been faithfully attended to; all the divinities had been duly consulted; the council had legitimatized it; the Fire Eater had been appointed leader; the war-prophet had the sacred protection forthcoming, and no band had lately gone forth from the village with so many assurances of success.

For many days the little streak of

ponies wound over the rolling brown land toward the north. Each man rode a swift horse and led another alongside. Far ahead ranged the cautious spies; no sailing hawk, no wailing coyote, no blade of grass did anything which was not reasoned out by mind or noted by their watchful eyes.

The Absaroke were the friends of the Yellow-Eyes who had a little fort at the mouth of the Muscleshell, where they gave their guns and gauds in great quantities. The Chis-chis-chash despised the men who wore hats. They barely tolerated and half protected their own traders. Nothing seemed so desirable as to despoil the Absaroke traders. They had often spied on the fort but always

found the protecting Absaroke too numerous. The scouts of the Fire Eater, however, found immense trace of their enemy's main camp as it moved up the valley of the Yellowstone. They knew that the Absaroke had finished their yellow-grass trading and had gone to hunt the buffalo. They hoped to find the little fort unprotected. Accordingly they sped on toward that point, which upon arrival they found sitting innocently alone in the grand landscape. Not a tepee was to be seen.

Having carefully reconnoitered and considered the place, they left their horses in a dry washout and crawled toward it through the sage brush. As the sky grew pale toward the early sun there was no sign of discovery

from its silent pickets. When within a hundred yards, in response to the commanding war-cry of the Fire Eater, they rose like ghosts from the sage and charged fast on the stockade. The gray logs stood stiffly unresponsive and gave no answering shots or yells as the Indians swept upon them. The gate was high, but the attacking force crept up on each other's bent backs as they strove for the interior. A tremendous commotion arose; rifles blazed inside and out. Two or three Indians sprang over but were shot down. Hatchets hacked at the timbers; gun-muzzles and drawn arrows sought the crevices in the logs; piercing yells rose above the hoarse shouts of the besieged for the stockade was full of white men.

The savages had not noticed a great number of Mackinaw boats drawn up on the river bank and concealed by low bushes. These belonged to a brigade of freighters who were temporarily housed in the post. As the surprised whites and creoles swarmed to the defense the Indians found themselves outnumbered three to one. The Fire Eater, seeing several braves fall before the ever-increasing fire from the palisades and knowing he could not scale the barrier, ordered a withdrawal. The beaten band drew slowly away carrying the stricken brothers.

The medicine was bad—the war-prophet had not had free communication with the mystery of the Good Gods. Some one had allowed him-

self to walk in a beaten path or had violated the sacred rights of the war-path, and the spirit of secrecy had left their moccasins. The skin of the little brown bat did not comfort the Fire Eater in his fallen state. He cast many burning glances back at the logs, now becoming mellowed by the morning light. The sun had apparently thrown his protection over them and the omen struck home to the wondering, savage mind. He remembered that the old men had always said that the medicine of the Yellow-Eyes was very strong and that they always fought insensibly like the gray bears. The flashing rifles which had blown their bodies back from the fort had astonished these Indians less by their execution

than by the indication they gave that the powers of darkness were not with them. They looked askance at the Fire Eater for their ill-success. He was enraged—a sudden madness had overpowered and destroyed his sense of the situation. One of those moods had come upon the savage child-mind when the surging blood made his eyes gleam vacantly like the great cats.

Slowly the dismayed band withdrew to the washout—casting backward glances at the walls which had beaten down their ambitions and would paint the tribes with ashes and blood-sacrifices for the lost. When there, they sat about dejectedly, finding no impulse to do more. From out of the west, in response to

their blue despondency, the clouds blew over the plains—the thunder rumbled—the rain came splashing and beating and then fell in blinding sheets. The Fire Eater arose and standing on the edge of the bank raised his arms in thanks to the Thunder Bird for his interposition in their behalf, saying: "Brothers, the Thunder Bird has come to his poor warriors to drive our enemies back as was promised to the prophet. He will put out the fires of the Yellow-Eyes, behind their medicine-logs. We are not afraid—our medicine is strong."

The rain poured for a time but abated gradually as the crashing Thunder Bird hurried away to the rising sun, and with a final dash it

separated into drops, letting the sunlight through the departing drizzle. The warriors began drying their robes and their weapons—preoccupied with the worries so much dampness had wrought for their powder and bow strings. Suddenly one of them raised his head, deerlike, to listen. As wild things they all responded, and the group of men was statuesque as it listened to the beat of horses' hoofs. As a flock of blackbirds leaves a bush—with one motion—the statuary dissolved into a kaleidoscopic twinkle of movement as the warriors grabbed and ran and gathered. They sought their ponies' lariats, but before they could mount a hundred mounted Yellow-Eyes swept down upon them, cir-

"The Fire Eater raised his arms to the Thunder Bird."

cling away as the Indians sowed their shots among them. But they were surrounded. The Thunder Bird had lied to the Chis-chis-chash—he had chosen to sacrifice the Fire Eater and the twenty Red-Lodge braves. There was now no thought of arresting the blow—there was but to die as their people always did in war. The keepers of the Red Lodge counting robes might cross the red pipes out with black, but they should not wash them out entirely.

The beaver-men—the traders—the creoles and the half-breeds slid from their horses and showered their bullets over the washout, throwing clouds of wet dirt over the braves crowding under its banks. The frightened Indian ponies swarmed

out of one end of the cut, but were soon brought back and herded together in the sagebrush by the moccasin boys of the Yellow-Eyes.

In maddened bewilderment the Fire Eater leaped upon the flat plain, made insulting gestures and shouted defiant words in his own language at the flashing guns. Above the turmoil could be heard the harsh, jerky voice which came from the bowels of the warrior rather than from his lips. No bullet found him as he stepped back into cover, more composed than when he had gone out. The nervous thrill had expanded itself in the speech. To his own mind the Fire Eater was a dead man; his medicine had departed; his spiritual protection was gone. He recognized

that to live his few remaining hours was all—he had only to do the mere act of dying; and that he would do as his demon nature willed it. His last sun was looking down upon him.

The Yellow-Eyes knew their quarry well. They recognized of old the difference between an Indian cooped up in a hole in a flat plain and one mounted on a swift war-pony, with a free start, and the whole plain for a race-track. They advanced with all caution—crawling, sneaking through sage and tufted grass. Occasionally as an Indian exposed himself to fire, a swift bullet from a beaver-man's long rifle crashed into his head, rolling him back with oozing brains. The slugs and ounce balls slapped

into the dirt from the muskets of the creole *engagés* and they were losing warrior after warrior. By cutting the dirt with their knives the Indians dug into the banks, avoiding a fire which raked the washout; and by throwing the dirt up on either side they protected their heads as they raised to fire.

A man walking over the flats by midday would have seen nothing but feeding ponies and occasional flashes of fire close to the grass, but a flying raven would have gloated over a scene of many future gorges. It would have seen many lying on their backs in the ditch—lying quite still and gazing up at his wheeling flight with stony gaze.

The white men had no means of

knowing how successful had been the rifle-fire and they hesitated to crawl closer. Each party in turn taunted the other in unknown tongues, but they well knew that the strange voices carried fearful insult from the loud defiance of the intonation. The gray bears or the mountain cats were as merciful as any there. As the sun started on its downward course the nature of the Gothic blood asserted itself. The white men had sat still until they could sit still no longer. They had fasted too long. They talked to each other through the sagebrush, and this is what happened when they cast the dice between Death and Dinner:

A tall, long-haired man clad in the fringed buckskin of a Rocky

Mountain trapper of the period, passed slowly around the circle of the siege, shouting loudly to those concealed among the brush and grasses. What he said the Chis-chis-chash did not know, but they could see him pointing at them continually.

The Fire Eater raised his voice: "Brothers, keep your guns full of fire; lay all your arrows beside you; put your war-ax under you. The Yellow-Eyes are going to kill us as we do the buffalo in a surround. Brothers, if the Thunder Bird does not come our fires will go out now. We will take many to the spirit-land."

Having completed the circle the tall white man waved a red blanket and started on a run toward the place

where the Indians lay. From all sides sprang the besiegers converging with flying feet. When nearly in contact the Indians fired their guns, killing and wounding. The whites in turn excitedly emptied theirs and through the smoke with lowered heads charged like the buffalo. The bow-strings twanged and the ravens could only see the lightning sweep of axes and furious gun-butts going over the pall of mingled dust and powder smoke. If the ravens were watching they would have seen nothing more except a single naked Indian run out of the turmoil, and after a quick glance backward speed away through the sagebrush. He could not fight for victory now; he only sought to escape; he was deserted by his Gods;

he ran on the tightened muscles of a desperate hope.

A bunch of horses had been left huddled by a squad of the enemy who had gone in with the charge on post and for these the Fire Eater made. No one seemed to notice the lone runner until a small herds-boy spied him, and though he raised his childish treble it made no impression. The Fire Eater picked up a dropped pony-whip and leading two ponies out of the bunch, mounted and lashed away. He passed the screaming boy within killing distance, but it was an evil day.

Before the small herder's voice asserted itself he was long out of rifle-shot though not out of pony-reach. A dozen men dashed after him. The

warrior plied his whip mercilessly in alternate slaps on each pony-quarter and the bareback savage drew steadily away to the hills. For many miles the white men lathered their horses after, but one by one gave up the chase. The dice doubtless said dinner as against an Indian with a double mount and many will think they gave a wise choice.

On flew the Fire Eater. Confusion had come to him. The bat on his scalp-lock said never a word. His heart was upside down within him. His shadow flew away before him. The great mystery of his tribe had betrayed and bewitched him. The Yellow-Eyed medicine would find him yet.

From a high divide the fugitive

stopped beside a great rock to blow his horses and he turned his eyes on the scene of ill-fate. He saw the Yellow-Eyes ride slowly back to their medicine-logs—he saw the ravens lighting down on the dry watercourse and for a long time he stood—not thinking—only gazing heavy-headed and vacant.

After a time he pulled his ponies' heads up from the grass and trotted them away. Growing composed, with his blood stilled, thoughts came slowly. He thanked the little brown bat when it reminded him of his savior. A furious flood of disappointment overcame him when he thought of his lifelong ambitions as a warrior—now only dry, white ashes. Could he go back to the village and

tell all? The council of the Red Lodges would not listen to his voice as they had before. When he spoke they would cast their eyes on the ground in sorrow. The Thunder Bird had demanded a sacrifice from him when he returned. He could not bear the thoughts of the wailing women and the screaming children and the old men smoking in silence as he passed through the camp. He could not wash the ashes from the faces of his people. The thoughts of it all deadened his soul, and he turned his ponies to the west. He would not go back. He had died with his warriors.

When the lodges lay covered with snow the Chis-chis-chash sang songs to the absent ones of the Fire Eater's

band. Through the long, cold nights the women sat rocking and begging the gods to bring them back their warriors. The "green-grass" came and the prophet of the Red Lodges admitted that the medicine spoke no more of the absent band. By "yellow-grass" hope grew cold in the village and socially they had readjusted themselves. It had happened in times past that even after two snows had come and gone warriors had found the path back to the camp, but now men saw the ghost of the Fire Eater in dreams, together with his lost warriors.

Another snow passed and still another. The Past had grown white in the shadows of an all-enduring Present when the Chis-chis-chash

began to hear vague tales from their traders of a mighty war-chief who had come down to the Shoshones from the clouds. He was a great "wakan" and he spoke the same language as the Chis-chis-chash. This chief said he had been a Cheyenne in his former life on earth, but had been sent back to be a Shoshone for another life. The Indians were overcome by an insatiate curiosity to see this being and urged the traders to bring him from the Shoshones—promising to protect and honor him.

The traders dominated by avarice, hoping to better their business, humored the stories and enlarged upon them. They half understood that the mystery of life and death are inextricably mixed in savage minds

—that they come and go, passing in every form from bears to inanimate things or living in ghosts which grow out of a lodge fire. So for heavy considerations in beaver skins they sent representatives to the Shoshones and there for an armful of baubles they prevailed upon those people to allow their supernatural war-chief to visit his other race out on the great meadows.

"If in the time of the next green-grass," said the trader, "the Chis-chis-chash have enough beaver, we will bring their brother who died back to their camp. We will lead him into the tribal council. If on the other hand they do not have enough skins, our medicine will be weak."

In the following spring the tribe

gathered at the appointed time and place, camping near the post. The big council-lodge was erected—everything was arranged—the great ceremonial-pipe was filled and the council-fire kept smoldering. Many packages of beaver-skins were unloaded by squaws at the gate of the traders and all important persons foregathered in the lodge.

When the pipe had passed slowly and in form the head-chief asked the trader if he saw beaver enough outside his window. This one replied that he did and sent for the man who had been dead.

The council sat in silence with its eyes upon the ground. From the commotion outside they felt an awe of the strange approach. Never be-

fore had the Chis-chis-chash been so near the great mystery. The door-flap was lifted and a fully painted, gorgeously arrayed warrior stepped into the centre of the circle and stood silently with raised chin.

There was a loud murmur on the outside but the lodge was like a grave. A loud grunt came from one man—followed by another until the hollow walls gave back like a hundred tom-toms. They recognized the Fire Eater, but no Indian calls another by his name.

Raising his hand with the dignity which Indians have in excess of all other men the Fire Eater said: "Brothers, it makes my heart big to look at you again. I have been dead but I came to life again. I

was sent back by the gods to complete another life on earth. The Thunder Bird made the Yellow-Eyes kill all my band when we went against the Absaroke. My medicine grew weak before the white man's medicine. Brothers, they are very strong. Always beware of the medicine of the traders and the beaver-men. They are fools and women themselves but the gods give them guns and other medicine things. He can make them see what is to happen long before he tells the Indians. They can see us before we come and know what we are thinking about. They have brought me back to my people, and my medicine says I must be a Chis-chis-chash until I die again. Brothers, I have made my talk."

VII

Among the Pony-Soldiers

VII

Among the Pony-Soldiers

THE burial scaffold of the Fire Eater's father had rotted and fallen down with years. Time had even bent his own shoulders, filled his belly and shrunken his flanks. He now had two sons who were of sufficient age to have forgotten their first sun-dance medicine, so long had they been warriors of distinction. He also had boys and girls of less years, but a child of five snows was the only thing which could relax the old man's features, set hard with thought and time and toil.

Evil days had come to the Buffalo

Indians. The Yellow-Eyes swarmed in the Indian country, and although the red warriors rode their ponies thin in war, they could not drive the invaders away. The little bands of traders and beaver-men who came to the camps of the Fire Eater's boyhood with open hands were succeeded by immense trains of wagons, drawn by the white man's buffalo. The trains wound endlessly toward the setting sun—paying no heed to the Indians. Yellow-Eyes came to the mountains where they dug and washed for the white man's great medicine, the yellow-iron. The fire boats came up the great river with a noise like the Thunder Bird—firing big medicine-guns which shot twice at one discharge.

The Fire Eater, with his brothers of the Chis-chis-chash, had run off with the horses and buffalo of these helpless Yellow-Eyes until they wanted no more. They had knocked them on the head with battle-axes in order to save powder. They had burned the grass in front of the slow-moving trains and sat on the hills laughing at the discomfiture caused by the playful fires. Notwithstanding, all their efforts did not check the ceaseless flow and a vague feeling of alarm began to pervade them.

Talking men came to them and spoke of their Great Father in Washington. It made them laugh. These talking men gave them enough blankets and medicine goods to make the

travvis poles squeak under the burden. When these men also told them that they must live like white men, the secret council lost its dignity entirely and roared long and loud at the quaint suggestion.

Steadily flowed the stream of wagons over the plains though the Indians plied them with ax and rifle and fire. Sober-minded old chiefs began to recall many prophecies of the poor trappers who told how their people swarmed behind them and would soon come on.

Then began to appear great lines of the Great Father's warriors—all dressed alike and marching steadily with their wagons drawn along by half-brothers to the horse. These men built log forts on the In-

dian lands and they had come to stay.

The time for action had come. Runners went through the tribes calling great councils which made a universal peace between the red brothers. Many and fierce were the fights with these blue soldiers of the Great Father. The Indians slew them by hundreds at times and were slain in turn. In a grand assault on some of these which lay behind medicine-wagons and shot medicine-guns the Indian dead blackened the grass and the white soldiers gave them bad dreams for many days.

The talking-wives and the fire wagon found their way, and the white hunters slew the buffalo of the Indians by millions, for their hides.

Every year brought more soldiers who made more log forts from which they emerged with their wagons, dragging after the trace of the Chis-chis-chash camp, and disturbing the buffalo and the elk. To be sure, the soldiers never came up because the squaws could move the travvis more rapidly than the others could their wagons, but it took many young men to watch their movements and keep the grass burning before them. Since the Indians had made the wagon fight, they no longer tried to charge the soldiers, thinking it easier to avoid them. The young men were made to run their ponies around the Yellow-Eyes before it was light enough in the morning for them to shoot, and they always found

the Yellow-Eyes heavy with sleep; but they did not grapple with the white soldiers because they found them too slow to run away and enemies who always fought wildly, like bears. Occasionally the Indians caught one of them alive, staked him out on a hill, and burned him in sight of his camp. These Yellow-Eyes were poor warriors, for they always whined and yelled under the torture. Half-breeds who came from the camp of the Yellow-Eyes said that this sight always made the white soldiers' blood turn to water. Still the invaders continued to crawl slowly along the dusty valleys. The buffalo did not come up from the south—from the caves of the Good Gods where they were made—in

such numbers as they once did, and the marching soldiers frightened those which did and kept them away. The young warriors never wearied of the excitement of these times, with its perpetual war-party, but old men remembered the prophecies of the beaver-men and that the times had changed.

The Fire Eater, as he talked to old Weasel Bear over their pipes and kettles, said:

"Brother, we used to think Yellow Horse had lost the Power of his Eyes when he came from his journey with the talking white man. We thought he had been made to dream by the Yellow-Eyes. We have seen the talking wives and we have seen the fire wagon. We have seen the

white men come until there are as many as all the warriors in this camp. All the foolish half-breeds say it is as the talking men say. Brother, I have seen in my dreams that there are more of them than the buffalo. They have their caves to the east as the buffalo do to the south, and they come out of them in the time of the green-grass just as the buffalo do. The Bad Gods send the Yellow-Eyes and the Good Gods send the buffalo. The gods are fighting each other in the air."

Weasel Bear smoked in silence until he had digested the thoughts of his friend, when he replied:

"Your talk is good. Two grasses ago I was with a war-party and we caught a white man between the

bends of the Tois-ta-to-e-o. He had four eyes and also a medicine-box which we did not touch. All the hair on his head and face was white as the snow. While we were making the fire to burn him with, he talked much strong talk. Before we could burn him he sank down at our feet and died a medicine-death. We all ran away. Bad Arm, the half-breed who was with us, said the man had prophesied that before ten snows all our fires would be put out by his people. Brother, that man had the Power of the Eyes. I looked at him strong while he talked. I have seen him in my dreams—I am afraid."

Weasel Bear continued:

"You hear our young scouts who

come in tell us how the white soldiers are coming in droves this grass. There are walking-soldiers, pony-soldiers, big guns on wheels and more wagons than they can count. Many of their scalps shall dry in our lodges, but, brother, we cannot kill them all."

In accordance with the tribal agreements the Chis-chis-chash joined their camp with the Dakota, and together both tribes moved about the buffalo range. Every day the scouts came on reeking ponies to the chiefs. The soldiers were everywhere marching toward the camps. The council fire was always smoldering. The Dakota and Chis-chis-chash chiefs sat in a dense ring while Sitting Bull, Gall, Crazy Horse and all the strong

men talked. They regarded the menace with awe; they feared for the camp with its women and children, but each voice was for war. It was no longer poor beaver-men or toiling bull-wagons; it was crowds of soldiers coming up every valley toward the villages which before had been remote and unmolested. If any soothsayer could penetrate the veil of the future he held his peace in the councils. The Indians tied up their ponies' tails for the struggle and painted for war. Three cartridges were all a fine buffalo robe would bring from a trader and even then it was hard to get them; but though the lodges had few robes many brass-bound bullets reposed in the war-bags.

The old thrill came over the Fire Eater in these agitated times. He could no longer leap upon his pony at full gallop, but rode a saddle. The lodge chafed him until he gathered up a few young men who had been acting as spies and trotted forth on a coyote prowl. For many days they made their way toward the south. One day as he sat smoking by a small fire on a mountain-top, somewhat wearied with travel, the restless young men came trotting softly back over the pine needles saying:

"Come out and you will see the white soldiers." He mounted and followed, and sitting there amid the mountain tangle he saw his dreams come true. The traders and the

talking men had not lied about the numbers of their people, for his eye did not come to the rear of the procession which wound up the valley like a great snake. There were pony-soldiers, walking-soldiers, guns on wagons, herds of the white men's buffalo, and teams without end. The Fire Eater passed his hands across his eyes before another gaze reassured him, and having satisfied himself he asked a young man: "Brother, you say there are as many more soldiers up north by the Yellowstone?"

"There are as many more—I saw them with my own eyes, and Blow Cloud over there has seen as many to the east. He could not count them."

For an hour the spies watched the white columns before the Fire Eater turned his pony, and followed by his young men disappeared in the timber.

Upon his arrival at the big camp the Fire Eater addressed the council:

"I have just come five smokes from the south, and I saw the white soldiers coming. I could not count them. They crawl slowly along the valley and they take their wagons to war. They cannot travel as fast as our squaws, but they will drive the buffalo out of the land. We must go out and fight them while our villages lie here close to the mountains. The wagon-soldiers cannot follow the women's pack-horses into the mountains."

The council approved this with much grunting, and the warriors swarmed from the villages—covering the country until the coyotes ran about continually to get out of their way. No scout of the enemy could penetrate to the Indian camps. The Indians burned the grass in front of the on-coming herds; they fired into the enemy's tents at night, and as the pony-soldiers bathed naked in the Yellowstone ran their horses over them. They would have put out many of the white soldiers' fires if the wagon-guns had not fired bullets which burst among them.

But it was all to no purpose.

Slowly the great snakes crawled through the valleys and the red war-

riors went riding back to the village to prepare for flight.

One morning the Fire Eater sat beside his lodge fire playing with his young son—a thing which usually made his eyes gleam. Now he looked sadly into the little face of the boy, who stood holding his two great scalp braids in his chubby hands. He knew that in a day or two the camp must move and that the warriors must try to stop the Yellow-Eyes. Taking from his scalp a buckskin bag which contained his bat-skin medicine he rubbed it slowly over the boy's body, the child laughing as he did so. The sun was barely stronger than the lodge fire when from far away on the hills beyond the river came a faint sound borne on the

morning wind, yet it electrified the camp, and from in front of the Fire Eater's tent a passing man split the air with the wolfish war-yell of the Chis-chis-chash. As though he had been a spiral spring released from pressure, the Fire Eater regained his height. The little boy sat briskly down in the ashes, adding his voice to the confusion, which now reigned in the great camp in a most disproportionate way. The old chief sprang to his doorway in time to see a mounted rider cut by, shrieking, "The pony-soldiers are coming over the hills!" and disappear among the tepees.

With intense fingers the nerved warrior readjusted his life treasure, the bat-skin, to his scalp-lock, then

opening his war-bags, which no other person ever touched on pain of death, he quickly daubed the war paint on his face. These two important things having been done, he filled his ammunition bag with a double handful of cartridges, tied his chief's war-bonnet under his chin, and grasping his rifle, war-ax and whip, he slid out of the tepee. An excited squaw hastily brought his best war-pony with its tail tied up, as it always was in these troublesome times. The Fire Eater slapped his hand violently on its quarter, and when he raised it there was the red imprint of the hand of war. The frightened animal threw back its head and backed away, but with a bound like a panther the savage was across its

back, a thing which in tranquil times the old man was not able to do.

This was the first time in years that the warrior had had a chance to wear his war-bonnet in battle. Rapidly adjusting his equipment as he sat his plunging horse, he brought his quirt down with a full arm swing and was away. By his side many sturdy war-ponies spanked along. At the ford of the river they made the water foam, and the far side muddy, with their dripping. They were grotesque demons, streaked and daubed, on their many-colored ponies. Rifles clashed, pony-whips cracked, horses snorted and blew, while the riders emitted the wild yelps which they had learned from the wolves. Back

from the hills came their scouts sailing like hawks, scarcely seeming to touch the earth as they flew along. "The pony-soldiers are coming—they are over the hill!" they cried. The crowded warriors circled out and rode more slowly as their chiefs marshaled them. Many young Red Lodge braves found the Fire Eater's place, boys who had never seen the old man in war, but who had listened in many winter lodges where his deeds were "smoked." As they looked at him now they felt the insistency of his presence—felt the nervous ferocity of the wild man; it made them eager and reckless, and they knew that such plumes as the Fire Eater wore were carried in times like these.

The view of the hill in front was half cut by the right bank of the coulee up which they were going, when they felt their hearts quicken. One, two, a half dozen, and then the soldiers of the Great Father came in a flood across the ridge, galloping steadily in column, their yellow flags snapping. The Fire Eater turned and gave the long yell and was answered by the demon chorus—all whipping along. The whole valley answered in kind. The rifles began to pop. A bugle rang on the hill, once, twice, and the pony-soldiers were on their knees, their front a blinding flash, with the blue smoke rolling down upon the Indians or hurried hither and thither by the vagrant winds. Several followers of

the Fire Eater reeled on their ponies or waved from side to side or clung desperately to their ponies' necks, sliding slowly to the ground as life left them. Relentless whips drove the maddened charge into the pall of smoke, and the fighting men saw everything dimly or not at all.

The rushing Red Lodges passed through the line of the blue soldiers, stumbling over them and striking downward with their axes. Dozens of riderless troop horses mingled with them, rushing aimlessly and tripping on dangling ropes and reins. Soon they were going down the other side of the hill and out of the smoke; not all, for some had been left behind. Galloping slowly, the red warriors crowded their cartridges into their

guns while over their heads poured the bullets of the soldiers, who in the smoke could no longer be seen. On all sides swarmed the rushing warriors mixed inextricably with riderless troop horses mad with terror. As the clouds of Indians circled the hill, the smoke blew slowly away from a portion of it, revealing the kneeling soldiers. Seeing this the Fire Eater swerved his pony, and followed by his band charged into and over the line. The whole whirling mass of horsemen followed. The scene was now a mass of confusion which continued for some time, but the frantic Fire Eater, as he dashed about, could no longer find any soldiers. As the tumult quieted and the smoke gave back, they all seemed to be dead.

"The rushing Red Lodges passed through the line of the blue soldiers."

Dismounting, he seized a soldier's hair and drew his knife, but was not able to wind his fingers into it. He desisted and put back his knife muttering: "A dog—he had not the hair of a warrior—I will not dance such a scalp."

The Fire Eater looked around him and saw the warriors hacking and using their knives, but the enemy had been wiped out. Horses lay kicking and struggling, or sat on their haunches like dogs with the blood pouring from their nostrils. He smiled at the triumph of his race, mounted his pony and with his reeking war-ax moved through the terrible scene. The hacking and scalping was woman's work—anyone could count a *coup* here. As for the Fire

Eater, his lodge was full of trophies, won in single combat. Slowly he made his way down the line of horror until he came to the end—to the place where the last soldier lay dead, and he passed on to a neighboring hill to view the scene. As he stood looking, he happened to cast his eyes on the ground and there saw a footprint. It was the track of a white man's moccasin with the iron nails showing, and it was going away from the scene of action. Turning his pony he trotted along beside the trail. Over the little hills it ran through the sage brush. Looking ahead, the Fire Eater saw a figure in a red blanket moving rapidly away. Putting his pony to speed he bore down upon the man with his rifle

cocked. The figure increased its gait, and the red blanket fell from the shoulders revealing a blue soldier. It was but an instant before the pony drew up alongside and the white man stood still, breathing heavily. The Fire Eater saw that his enemy had no gun, the thought of which made him laugh: "A naked warrior; a man without even a knife; does the man with the iron moccasins hope to outrun my war-pony?"

The breathless and terrified white man held out his hand and spoke excitedly, but the Fire Eater could not understand. With menacing rifle he advanced upon his prey, whereat the white man, suspecting his purpose, quickly picked up a loose stone and threw it at him but only hit the pony.

The Fire Eater straightway shot the soldier in the thigh and the latter sat down in the dirt. The old chief got off his horse, chuckling while he advanced, and sat down a few yards from the stricken man. He talked to him, saying: "Brother, I have you now. You are about to die. Look upon the land for the last time. You came into my country to kill me, but it is you who are to be killed."

The white soldier could not make out the intention of the Indian for the language was mild and the face not particularly satanic. He pleaded for his life, but it had no effect upon the Fire Eater, who shortly arose and approached him with his battle-ax. The man saw clearly now what was to happen and buried his face in

his hands. Too often had the hunter-warrior stood over his fallen quarry to feel pity; he knew no more of this than a bird of prey, and he sank his three-pronged battle-ax into the soldier's skull and wiped it on his pony's shoulder saying: "Another dog's head; I will leave him for the women and the boys. If he had thrown away his iron moccasins his fire would not be out. I give the meat to the little gray wolves and to the crows which bring us messages from the spirit-world." And he resumed his mount.

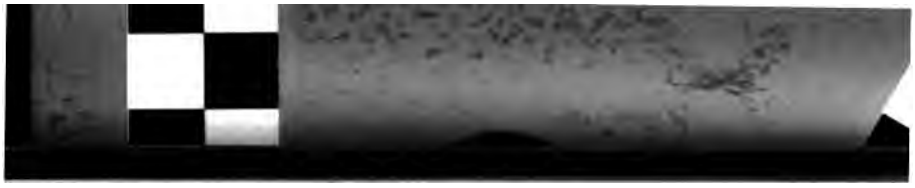
Riding back, he saw the squaws swarming over the battlefield, but the warriors had gone. Men that he met in the valley told him that they had more soldiers surrounded

in the bluffs up the valley, but that the white-faces could not get away and that the Indians were coming back for fresh ponies. Enough men had been left to hold the besieged.

Coming to his lodge he got a new pony, and, as he mounted, said to his youngest wife: "Wan-ha-ya, give me my little boy: put him up behind me on my pony. I will show him war."

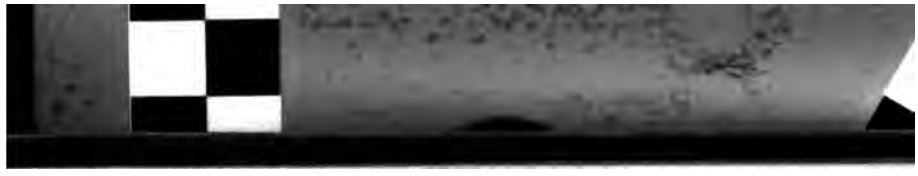
The squaw held the chubling and put him on the desired place, where he caught on like a burr. The Fire Eater made his way to the battle ground. There the squaws were stripping and mutilating. Finding a dead soldier who was naked, he dismounted, setting the boy on the ground. Pulling his

great knife from its buckskin sheath he curled the fat little hand around its haft and led him to the white body. "Strike the enemy, little son, strike like a warrior," and the Fire Eater, simulating a blow, directed the small arm downward on the corpse. Comprehending the idea, the infant drew up and drove down, doing his best to obey the instructions, but his arm was far too weak to make the knife penetrate. The fun of the thing made him scream with pleasure, and the old Fire Eater chuckled at the idea of his little warrior's first *coup*. Then he rode back to the lodge.



VIII

The Medicine-Fight of the Chis-chis-chash.



VIII

The Medicine-Fight of the Chis-chis-chash.

HITHER and yon through the valleys dragged the wagon-soldiers, while the Indians laughed at them from the hills. In the time of the yellow-grass the tribe had made a successful hunt and the sides of their lodges were piled high with dry meat. Their kettles would boil through this snow.

As the tops of the mountains grew white, the camp was moved into a deep gorge of the Big Horn Mountains out of the way of the trailing Yellow-Eyes. For a thousand feet

the rock walls rose on either side. A narrow brook wound down between their narrow ways. Numerous lateral cañons crossed the main one, giving grass and protection to their ponies. As it suited the individual tastes of the people, the lodges were placed in cozy places. When the snows fell the Indians forgot the wagon-soldiers, as they feasted and gossiped by their camp-fires.

They felt secure in their eerie home, though the camp-cryer frequently passed, shouting: "Do not let your ponies wander down the cañon and make trails for the Yellow-Eyes to see." The women worked the colored beads and porcupine quills, chatted with each oth-

er, or built discreet romances as fancy dictated. The men gambled, or made smoke-talks by the night fires. It was the Indian time of social enjoyment.

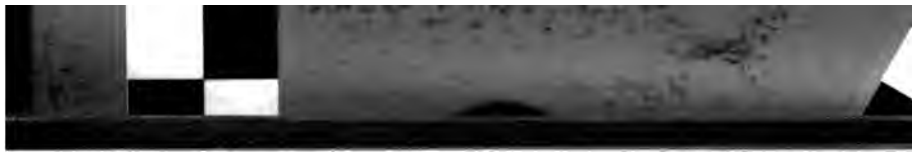
Restless young men beat up the country in search of adventure; and only this day a party had arrived with Absaroke scalps which they were dancing after the sun had gone. The hollow beat of the tom-toms multiplied against the sides of the cañon, together with the wild shrieking and yelling of the rejoicers; but the old Fire Eater had grown weary of dancing scalps. He had danced his youthful enthusiasm away, caring more to sit by his lodge fire playing with his little boy or passing the pipe with men who could remember

the days which were better than these—with men who could recall to his mind the ardor of his lost youth. Thus he sat on this wild, whooping night with old Big Hand by his side to smoke his talk, and with his son asleep across his lap.

"Where did the war-party leave its trail as it came to the lodges?" he asked.

Big Hand in reply said: "The man who strikes said they came over the mountains—that the snow lay deep. They did not lead up from the plains. They obeyed the chiefs. If it was not so, the camp-soldiers would have beaten them with sticks. You have not heard the women or the dogs cry."

"It is good," continued the Fire



Eater. "The wagon-soldiers will not find a trail on the high hills. The snow would stop their wheels. They will dream that the Chis-chis-chash were made into birds and have flown away." The Fire Eater chuckled as he loaded his pipe.

Then Big Hand: "I have heard, brother, that ponies passed the herders at the mouth of the cañon last smoke. It was cold, and they had their robes tight over their heads. It is bad."

"Yes, you talk straight. It is bad for the pony-trails to show below where the land breaks. Some dog of an Absaroke who follows the Grey Fox may see them. Ponies do not go to live in the hills in the time of snow. The ponies will not travel

straight, as the herders drive them back. They will understand. With another sun, I shall call the council. It will talk the herders' eyes open. The young men have closed ears in these days. The cold makes their bones stiff. Brother, when we were young we could see a horse pass in the night. We could smell him. We could tell if he had a man on his back."

Big Hand gave wise consideration to his companion's statement, saying it was as he spoke. "Brother, those big horses which we took from the pony-soldiers run badly in the herd. They gather in a bunch and run fast. They go over the herders when they see the valley. They will do nothing unless you strike them over

the head. They are fools like their white riders were."

So the old men gravely passed the pipe over the little things of life, which to them bore all their interest in the world. The squaw combed her hair and from time to time put fresh sticks on the fire. After a while the boy woke up and stretched himself cubbishly across his father's knees. The ancient one gave him a piece of fresh meat, which he held in both hands as he gnawed it, smearing his chubby face with grease. Having devoured his morsel he blinked sleepily, and the old Indian tucked him away in the warm recesses of his old buffalo-robe couch, quite naked, as it was their custom to sleep during the winter nights. Long

sat the smokers, turning their tongues over youthful remembrances, until Big Hand arose and drawing his robe about him, left the lodge.

The Fire Eater removed the small buckskin bag which contained his little brown bat's skin from his scalp-lock and smoked to it saying: "Keep the big horses from running down the cañon—keep the eyes of the herders open while I sleep—keep the little boy warm—keep the bad spirits outside the lodge after the fire can no longer see them." With these devotions concluded, he put the relic of the protection of the Good Gods in his war-bag which hung on his resting-mat over his head. Undressing, he buried himself in his buffalo robes. The fire

died down, the tom-toms and singing in the adjoining lodges quieted gradually, and the camp slept. All was still, and it was bitter cold outside, though the Chis-chis-chash lay snugly under their hairy rugs, drawing them over their heads, shutting out the world of spirits and sound and cold.

In the ceaseless round of time the night was departing to the westward, when as though it were in a dream the old warrior was conscious of noise. His waking sense was stirred. Rapid, frosty crackling of snow ground by horse's hoofs came through the crevices of his covering. All unusual, he sat up with a savage bang, as it were, and bent a stiff ear to the darkness. His senses were

electric, but the convolutions of his brain were dead. A rifle shot, far away but unmistakable. Others followed; they came fast. But not until the clear notes of a bugle blazed their echoing way up the rock walls did he, the Fire Eater, think the truth. He made the lodge shake with the long yell of war. He did the things of a lifetime now and he did them in a trained, quick way. He shoved his feet into his moccasins and did no more because of the urgency of the case; then he reached for his rifle and belt and stood in the dark lodge aroused. His sleep was gone but he did not comprehend. Listening for the briefest of moments, he heard amid the yelping of his own people the dull, resonant

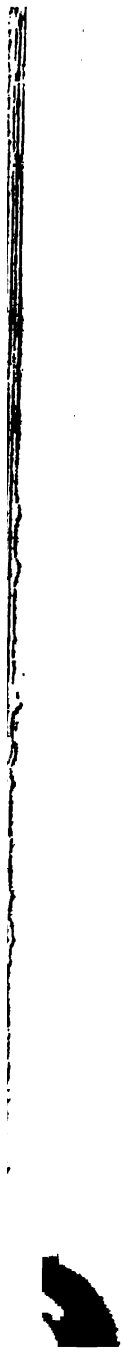
roar which he knew was the white man's answer.

Fired into a maddened excitement he snatched up his precious boy, and seizing a robe ran out of the lodge followed by his squaw. Overhead the sky was warming but the cañon was blue dark. Every moment brought the shots and roar nearer. Plunging through the snow with his burden, the Fire Eater ran up a rocky draw which made into the main cañon. He had not gone many arrow-flights of distance before the rushing storm of the pony-soldiers swept past his deserted lodge. Bullets began to whistle about him, and glancing back he saw the black form of his squaw stagger and lie slowly down in the snow. He had,

by this time, quite recovered the calm which comes to the tired-out man when tumult overtakes him. Putting the boy down on a robe behind a rock, and standing naked in the frosty air he made his magazine gun blaze until empty; then picking the boy up ran on higher up the rocks until he was on the table land of the top of the cañon. Here he resumed his shooting, but the darkness and distance made it difficult to see. The noise of the fight clattered and clanged up from the depths to him and echoed down from above where the charge had gone. Other Indians joined him and they poured their bullets into the pony-soldiers.

The Bad Gods had whispered to the Yellow-Eyes; they had made

"He made his magazine gun blaze until empty."

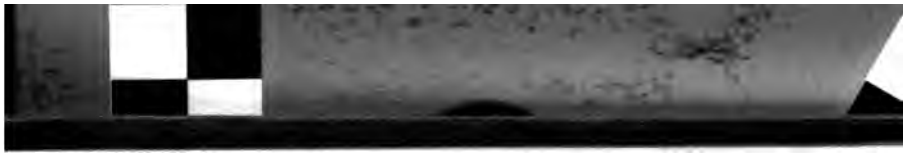


them see under the snow. The Chis-chis-chash were dead men, but they would take many with them to the spirit-land. The Fire Eater felt but a few cartridges in his belt and knew that he must use them sparingly. The little boy sat crying on the buffalo robe. Holding his smoking rifle in one hand, he passed the other over his scalp-lock. The bat-skin medicine was not there. For the first time since the Good Gods had given it to him, back in his youth, did he find himself without it. A nameless terror overcame him. He was a truly naked man in the snow, divested of the protection of body and soul.

He meditated long before he reached down and gathered up his

offspring. Carefully wrapping up the wailing infant, he handed it to a squaw who stood near shivering and moaning wildly. "Stay here and hold my boy. I am going back."

Shoving cartridges into his magazine, he made his way down, the light snow flying before him. Rounding the rocks he could see down into the main cañon; see the pony-soldiers and their Indian allies tearing down and burning the lodges. The yellow glare of many fires burned brightly in contrast with the cold blue of the snow. He scanned narrowly the place where his own lodge had been and saw it fall before many hands to be taken to their fires. With raised shoulders and staring eyes he stood aghast. He drunk in the desecration



in all its awful significance. The bat's skin—the hand of the Good Gods—was removed from him; his shadow was as naked as his back.

In the snow a hundred yards below him lay his young squaw, the mother of his boy, and she had not moved since she lay down.

As the pony-soldiers finally saw the stark figure of the Indian among the rocks they sent a shower of bullets around him. He had no medicine; the Bad Gods would direct the bullets to his breast. He turned and ran frantically away.

The last green-grass had seen the beplumed chief with reddened battle-ax leading a hundred swift warriors over the dying pony-soldiers, but now the cold, blue snow looked on

a naked man running before bullets, with his medicine somewhere in the black smoke which began to hang like a pall over the happy winter camp of the bravest Indians. The ebb and flow of time had fattened and thinned the circumstances of the Fire Eater's life many times, but it had never taken his all before. It had left him nothing but his boy and a nearly empty gun. It had placed him between the fire of the soldiers' rifles and the cruel mountain winds which would pinch his heart out.

With his boy at his breast he flew along the rim-rock like a crow, hunting for shelter from bullets and wind. He longed to expend his remaining cartridges where each would put out a white man's fire. Meanwhile

recovering from their surprise, the Indians had gathered thickly on the heights and fought stiffly back. Being unable to follow them, the pony-soldiers drew back, but as they retreated they left the village blazing, which the Chis-chis-chash could not prevent. Their rifles had only handed them over to the hungry winter.

The Fire Eater sat muffled on a ledge, firing from time to time, and anxiously scanning his shots. The cold made him shake and he could not hold his rifle true. His old, thin blood crept slowly through his veins, and the child cried piteously. His fires were burning low; even the stimulus of hate no longer stirred him as he looked down on the white men who had burned his all and

shot his wife and were even then spattering his den in the rocks with lead. He gave up, overpowered by the situation. With infinite difficulty he gathered himself erect on his stiffened joints and took again his burden in his trembling arms. Standing thus on the wind-swept height, with the bullets spotting the rocks around him, he extended his right hand and besought the black, eddying smoke to give him back his bat-skin; he begged the spirits of the air to bring it to him. He shouted his harsh pathos at a wild and lonely wind, but there was no response.

Then off through the withering cold and powdery snow moved the black figure of despair tottering

"He shouted his harsh pathos at a wild and lonely wind, but there was no response."

slowly away from the sound of rifles which grew fainter at each step. He chattered and mumbled, half to himself, half to the unseen influences of nature, while the child moaned weakly under his clutched robe. When he could but barely hear the noises of the fight, he made his way down into the cañon where he shortly came upon a group of his tribesmen who had killed a pony and were roasting pieces over a log fire. They were mostly women and children, or old, old men like himself. More to note than their drawn and leathery faces was the speechless terror brooding over all. Their minds had not digested their sudden fate. If the young warriors broke before the guns of the pony-soldiers, worse yet might

overtake them, though the wind-swept table lands dismayed them equally with the bullets. Munching their horse-meat, clutching their meager garments, they elbowed about the fires saying little. In their homeless helplessness their souls deadened. They could not divine the immediate future. Unlike the young warriors whose fires flashed brighter as the talons of Death reached most fiercely for them, they shuddered and crouched.

In the light of day they could see how completely the ravishing fire had done its work. Warriors came limping back from the battle, their robes dyed with a costly vermilion. They sat about doing up their wounds in filthy rags, or sang their death-

songs amid the melancholy wailing of the squaws.

Having warmed himself and quieted the boy, the Fire Eater stalked down the cañon, past the smoking poles, stopping here and there to pick up fragments of skins which he used to swaddle the boy. Returning warriors said the soldiers were going away, while they themselves were coming back to get warm. Hearing this, the old man stalked down the creek toward the place where his lodge had been. He found nothing but a smouldering heap of charred robes and burnt dried meat. With a piece of lodge pole he poked away the ashes, searching for his precious medicine and never ceasing to implore the Good Gods to restore

it to him. At last, dropping the pole, he walked up the side cañon to the place where his wife had fallen. He found her lying there. Drawing aside the robe he noticed a greenish pallor and fled from Death.

Finding the ponies tethered together by their necks, he caught them, and improvising packs out of old robes and rawhide filled them with half-burnt dried meat. With these he returned to the fires, where he constructed a rude shelter for the coming night. The boy moaned and cried through the shivering darkness as the old Fire Eater rocked him in his arms to a gibberish of despairing prayer.

Late in the night, the scouts came in saying that the walking-soldiers

were coming, whereat the Indians gathered their ponies and fled over the snow. The young men stayed behind and from the high cliffs fought back the soldiers. Many weak persons in the retreating band sat down and passed under the spell of the icy wind. The Fire Eater pressed along carrying his rifle and boy, driving his ponies in a herd with others. It was too cold for him to dare to ride a horse. The crying boy shivered under the robe. The burden-bearer mumbled the troubled thoughts of his mind: "My mystery from the Good Gods is gone; they have taken it; they gave it to the fire. I am afraid. The bad spirits of the wind will get under my robe. They will enter the body

of my boy. Oh! little brown bat, come sit on my hand! Do not let them take the boy!"

Hour after hour he plodded along in the snow. His body was warmed by his exertions and the boy felt cold against his flesh. He noted this, and with the passing moments the little frame grew more rigid and more cold until it was as a stone image in the Fire Eater's arms. Stopping with his back to the wind, he undid the robe and fingered his burden. He knew that the shadow had gone;—knew that the bad spirits had taken it away. "Oh! Bad Gods, oh! Evil Spirits of the night, come take my shadow. You have stolen my boy; you have put out my lodge fire; put out the fire of my body!